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THE NEW CATHOLICISM
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BY THE

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE <u>PRIESTLY SACRIFICE</u>	1
HOW THE CROSS RECONSTRUCTS <u>PERSONALITY</u>	17
<u>FAITH IN GOD</u> AND FAITH IN CHRIST	33
THE <u>CHURCH OF THREE DIMENSIONS</u>	49
THE CONTINUAL <u>COMING OF CHRIST</u>	65
THE HIGHER <u>MYSTICISM</u>	81
THE PERMANENCE OF THE <u>CHURCH</u>	97
SINS OF THE <u>TONGUE</u>	113
CHRIST THE RULER OF THE SPIRIT REALM	129
THE NEW <u>CATHOLICISM</u>	145
THE TRINITY AND THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION	161
THE BIBLE AND THE <u>CHURCH</u>	177

The Priestly Sacrifice

“Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”—1 PET. ii. 5.

IT was over against the exclusive priestly claims of the Roman hierarchy that the Reformation made the counter-claim of the priesthood of all believers. There was no priestly caste to which the exercise of special gifts was confined ; but every Christian was, in his own right, a priest. It is beyond all doubt that this is a scriptural doctrine, of the profoundest importance, and the only bulwark against false and exclusive priesthood. Unfortunately it has been almost forgotten, it has received no proper expression in our thought or worship, and by its neglect it has been virtually denied. This most lamentable surrender has been brought about in the reformed Churches by a process which owes little to thought-out principles, but much to popular prejudice, careless drift, and wrong emphasis.

There has been a prejudice against the use of the hated word “priest.” Priesthood had become so intolerant in its exercise, had gathered to itself such hateful associations, and readmission of its errors was so dreaded, that it was thought to be the best way of fighting the false idea to drop the use of the

word altogether, to go as far as possible to the other extreme, and to deny the very basis on which priesthood had been erected. It is now obvious that this was mistaken strategy. The very common practice of dropping religious terms which have been abused or misunderstood leaves us with an ever-diminishing vocabulary, while it makes a complete present of them to the enemy. And since there is no great error which does not gather round some original truth, and which persists, not because of its error, but because of the truth it contains, it often means surrendering not only the term, but the truth, to the enemy. This attitude has to take up a very ruthless condemnation, not only of the development of the Christian religion, but of all other religions which have included a priesthood; a condemnation which is more and more impossible to a modern mind. It necessitates that if we want to talk about the true meaning of the idea, we have to go to the enemy for our illustration. And it allows the enemy the opportunity of adjusting his position so as to cover our original objection, which in the case of priesthood is being rapidly accomplished. In short, it evacuates the entire area of the conflict and leaves the enemy in complete possession.

More serious perhaps is the reaction to an unthought-out position of extreme individualism in religion. The priestly idea is, of course, founded on the notion of mediation, and when this has been taken to mean interposition rather than intercession, veto rather than vehicle, hindrance rather than help, there is a temptation to aim that religion needs no mediation; and so

the priestly office, first of the ministry, then of the Church, then of the individual, and finally of Christ, is denied; when you discover that somehow you have parted with Christianity. The next move is a hurried race round other religions, old and new, and finally scepticism, pessimism, and despair. Yet this individualist religion, despite its logical conclusions, and the warnings that are clearly sounding, is still strong among us. We have come near to surrendering Christianity at a point where we can claim no support from philosophy, psychology, or sociology.

It is a mistake to imagine that we can solve the situation by exalting the prophet over against the priest, for the one is as open to abuse as the other. Priestly abuse is, indeed, more easily detected, for it is really a denial of priestly functions to make them exclusive in any way. But the prophet with his "thus saith the Lord" makes claims which may be quite baseless. The Old Testament says little about false priests, but a good deal about false prophets. The danger of the prophet is that he may substitute a natural for a spiritual power; he can use his personality, his emotion, his psychic power for his own glory or to play the devil's game. It is too hastily assumed that the prophetic utterance is self-authenticating, so that the prophet wins a response from the heart of man, and "still at the prophet's feet the nations sit." The only audience that most true prophets have ever gained is that which gathered to stone them to death. Of course, after they are buried, and their words are embalmed in books, and the par-

ticular reference they bore is forgotten, they find an audience, but often among those who, while they build their tombs, would stone their successors. It is plain that there are dangers in both functions, and the only way to escape them is to get to the Christian position of the out-pouring of the Spirit on all flesh, and the priesthood of all believers. Only these must be taken seriously.

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THE FACT OF PRIESTHOOD

1. On what does it rest?

(a) It has a natural basis.

That natural basis is simply that man is a social animal. It is only through an intense social life that he awakens to self-consciousness and develops a personality, only through intimate contact with his fellows does he develop his highest faculties, especially in art and religion. This does not sanction the merging of man in either State or Church. Both these fail to fulfil their function unless they develop personality and even individuality.

But it is in our psychological structure that the necessity of priesthood is clearest. The word that comes to us from without, although unintelligible unless the word be also within, is nevertheless more powerful than the word from within taken alone. Children want to be told the tales they already well know. The physician calls in another doctor to administer to him, knowing that it is easier to have faith in another. Although we believe it with all our souls, we want to hear a human voice say, "God is; Christ is risen; thy sins are forgiven thee."

And in our organized life we find it necessary that all those things which we have in common should be represented. We are a sovereign people, but that does not prevent our having a king. We are a democracy, but we can have representatives. There is no reason why in religion there should not be those who peculiarly represent the priestly function of the Church, by their office, character, and life. All these things are dangerous when they become substitutes. The dangers are only obviated when the citizens of the State or the Church claim the full exercise both of their rights and responsibilities.

(b) It has a Christian sanction.

The Christian revelation is not divided from the revelation in nature by an impassable gulf; but it is built upon, reinforces, and sublimates it, by revealing the dependence of the natural on the spiritual. Christ is not a confusing addition to the scheme of religion. There is not a natural religion which does not cry out for Him, dream of Him, predict Him. If we cannot understand the necessity of Christ, it is because we have not yet fathomed our own need. It is therefore to be expected that Christianity will take hold of priesthood, reveal its true meaning, elevate it, and remove all that has made it evil.

Now, Christ is our High Priest. His function is a double one. Although we may know God for ourselves, we need to know Him through Christ to be quite sure of God. He represents God to us, and to do this has to be Himself truly God. But that is the prophetic side of His work. It is His priestly function to represent us to God. We do not understand this so easily because we have so long lost the idea of priest-

hood. Why does man need to be represented to God? The answer is that he needs to be represented *in* God. Man must have his Representative in the Godhead. Christ therefore carries our humanity into the holiest of all; that is, into the inner depths of Godhead. But His priesthood is not in virtue of His Godhead, but in virtue of His humanity; it is only in so far as He shares with us our humanity that He is true Priest.

Now every Christian is in virtue of his being a member of Christ, and by His anointing a true priest. In so far as we are filled with the Spirit of God we do represent God to men, and in so far as we are truly human in our sympathies we represent man to God. It would no doubt be convenient to escape these dreadful responsibilities, but we cannot. If we are unfaithful, inconsistent, ungodly, people get from us a wrong notion of God. More people are kept out of religion by its unworthy representatives than by anything else. But this is still rather the prophetic side. As priests it is our function to be continually carrying humanity into the presence of God. All who have been anointed by Christ are in the vanguard of humanity, they have entered for others into the holy place. The further we enter in, the more we shall draw others after us. And for this priesthood is more effective than prophecy, both on the life of the Christian and on those he would influence; as example is more effective than exhortation, and as the saint is the greater servant of God. For the prophet is bound to use his personality, and sometimes it obtrudes; we forget the saint. And it is priesthood rather than prophecy that

makes the saint. We must be all and more than all we want others to be. For their sakes we sanctify ourselves.

2. How shall this priesthood be represented?

(a) Our common worship will naturally set this forth.

When we come together for worship it is primarily to present ourselves to God in discharge of our priestly office. We can do this privately, but not so well as together, for we are not priests so much as a priesthood. We ought to be as clear that this is our bounden duty and service as any Roman priest is that he ought to repeat his office and say Mass every day. When we come to church we come to fulfil *our* office and to offer *our* sacrifice.

This would make a tremendous difference to our worship. It would create a different atmosphere. We should be there not to hear some man, or in obedience to some conventional custom, but in the knowledge that the salvation of humanity depended upon our being present. It would make our churchgoing what it ought to be: Divine Service. What a difference of attitude there would be, what an earnestness and consecration would breathe abroad. It would soon make a difference to our places of worship. There would be no risk of thinking that they were auction-rooms, music-halls, or auditoriums. Everyone would see on entering that they were built as places where men could offer themselves to God, places for prayer and self-oblation.

And this would affect only for good the preaching on which the reformed Churches have made so much to depend. It does not really

create the best preaching to make it the means of gathering an audience. No doubt our preachers manage to overcome the temptation, but no one can doubt that it is there: the temptation to preach to gather an audience, which if yielded to must be the damnation of both preacher and audience. One must be interesting, one must be inspiring, or people will not come. But the strain of that makes rather for clap-trap and perspiration than anything else. But if one knew that there would be gathered together, only the greatest necessities hindering, a body of those who would be present in order to rededicate themselves to God, preaching would become a different thing. It would be possible for preaching to build up, to dare to instruct people in their faith. We could save the great utterances and the prophetic preaching for the audiences that need it, which are mostly outside the Church.

(b) It ought to be represented in our ministry.

Paragraphs have recently appeared in the Press which allege that I have made priestly claims and introduced Roman ceremonial. The charge is perfectly true; but nothing has been done save what is based, not only upon Christian, but upon Free Church principles. Let me explain.

I regard myself as thrice a priest. I am a priest because I am a Christian; that is, I am priest as each one of you is. I am a priest because I have been called to lead in worship a congregation of priests; that is, I am a priest because you are priests. I am a priest of the catholic Church; for when I was called to the ministry I was called to minister not to a de-

nomination or a sect, but to that Body of Christ which has a priestly Head. I am a priest because I am a minister of Christ's One Church. But I cannot secure formal recognition of this. There is no body which can give me recognition of my catholic priesthood, simply because Christendom is divided. I regard no Church as having the gift of catholic and apostolic orders. But I can guide my whole ministry by the general consensus of the Church, serve its unity, and refuse to be sectarian and schismatic. You who called me here gave me the second order of priesthood, and you can take it away. You can deny your priestly office as a Church, and therefore deny my representing you in that capacity. That would degrade me to the level of a paid agent, a hired orator at so much a time. I cannot believe that you would desire ever to do that. Thank God, no one but Christ, who gave me my priesthood as a believer, can take that from me again.

But is it not unfortunate, some one will ask, that you should adopt Roman ceremonial to express this, when Romanism has a quite different conception of priesthood? I assume that there is no objection to anything merely because the Roman Church does it, for if that veto were to rule we should have to drop almost everything Christian. The objection, I understand, is to that which is distinctively Roman. To that I have only to say that I am unaware of adopting anything distinctively Roman. Our liturgy is either scriptural or moulded on Eastern forms. The vestments worn at the Communion could not be matched in any Roman, or in any Greek Church, for that

matter. They are more primitive than either. What has been called a climax, communicating kneeling before the Table, is Wesleyan, among other things. But I am aware that this does not meet the root of the objection, which is that we should adopt "Catholic" practices while professing to adhere to Free Church principles.

The answer to that will sound startling and seem paradoxical, but it is sober fact. I know of no better way save the adoption of primitive, Catholic practice to set forth our distinctive, Reformed, Free Church principles. What we have to set forth, be it remembered, is that we are all priests taking part in a priestly service, and that we do this with all the right and power which any priesthood can truly claim. Now, by what looks like a Divine Providence, Catholic practice has retained within itself the recognition of the very principles we claim. Take the position of the celebrant at the Eucharist. Reformed Churches endeavoured to reproduce more nearly the institution of the Lord's Supper by gathering round a table. And if this could be actually carried out it would be excellent. But in actual practice it has an unfortunate appearance. It looks as if the minister were taking the place of Christ, and as if deacons and elders were either occupying the chief seats in the synagogues or presiding like directors or other notable persons over a public meeting. Whereas the Catholic custom does put everybody on the *same side of the Table and facing the same way*. If communicants come up to the Table, as, when it is convenient, we have done, it can hardly be claimed that this does anything to differentiate the celebrant from the con-

gregation : on the contrary. Even in the most corrupt of all the liturgies (by that we mean the most carelessly compiled and overloaded), the Roman Missal, there is a clear recognition of the priesthood of the congregation. At a solemn point in the service the celebrant turns to the people and says : "Brethren, pray that this my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty." And when we come to the traditional Eucharistic vestments the testimony is quite clear. *They are not sacerdotal vestments at all.* They are not confined to priests, even in the Roman Church, but may be, and are, worn by those not in priests' orders. They were certainly not sacerdotal in origin. They are simply the ancient, classical, and lay dress of early Christian times. I have been asked by an indignant person in a frock-coat which of the Apostles I thought I was imitating. My answer was, "Paul, at any rate." For this is the nearest we can get to the garments in which the gospel was preached and in which the martyrs died. They have been retained by the ministers at the Eucharist while all the world has changed its fashion ; a rather beautiful piece of symbolism. If it is unbecoming that at the Eucharist, at which both sexes are present, the leader shall parade his masculinity, or set the latest fashion in men's attire, or, what is almost as bad, be just a generation behind (and there seems to be more and more agreement on this point), what dress is most suitable ? The black gown is priestly, despite its Genevan rebaptism ; academic costume hardly emphasizes the minister's oneness with the rest of the congregation, and black is out of place here ; a

surplice is monastic and mediæval. There is nothing so suitable, so simple, or so symbolic as this apostolic, primitive, and lay Eucharistic dress.

And now to turn to something more important.

WE MUST REMEMBER THE FUNCTION OF PRIESTHOOD

1. It is the offering of sacrifice.

(a) That will of course permeate the whole life.

† The Christian is member of a holy priesthood, and therefore he leads a separated life. There are things that are lawful for him, but he must sacrifice them because he has a special task and occupies an advanced position. And here the ideal of priest is a better guide for him than that of prophet; for the discharge of priesthood is mostly a secret and invisible thing, not a forcing ourselves upon people in a preachy and proselytizing way, but a giving of ourselves to a life of intercession, praying not for ourselves, or for our friends only, but for those who do not, and cannot as yet, pray for themselves.

I wish our lay priesthood would consider the dedicating of themselves to such a task, and give their substance, thought, and time to such a divine service. In debating whether "to pray is to labour" or "to labour is to pray," we can solve the dilemma by labouring that we may pray, and praying that we may labour. I like to think of a friend of mine, a woman who lives on Dartmoor, who works with brain and hand simply to keep open a little chapel where

anyone can go in and pray, and where she keeps up an almost continuous intercession, especially for those whose cases and needs are made known to her, often with very wonderful effect. This is the sort of thing that helps to keep humanity sensitive and binds the world to the feet of God.

On the basis of such a service there will rise deeds of sacrifice that will really bless humanity. There is almost infinite capacity for sacrifice in humanity, so much so that men will sacrifice themselves for a bad cause, rather than not at all, and women will sacrifice themselves to the destruction of others, if they cannot do it to their salvation. But sacrifice can be thrown away on something worthless, it can be exploited by the selfish, it can be used for purposes of destruction. It needs direction, the right motive, the saving instinct behind it.

(b) Our worship will naturally emphasize this element.

If the sacrificial fires are to be kept burning, they need constant watching and repairing. We need to be frequently reminded that this is the chief business of life. No one who has attempted it will affect to despise anything that will recall and inspire our task.

And, deeper than any act by which we sacrifice, there must be the offering of the will, a mystical self-dedication, which keeps the motives clear and makes all the difference to the benefit it brings. It is primarily our dedication to God that concerns us, for in the end that will mean the most lasting service for man. It is not enough merely to desire

to serve man. That has poured forth service, often without result, sometimes only for evil. Our worship is designed to give us opportunity for this very thing. Then, when it is translated into action it is spontaneous, more truly expressed, and the sense of making a sacrifice, which can become quite morbid or proud, is taken away. The Christian is never conscious of making any sacrifice.)

(This is why the sacrifice the Christian priesthood offers is called a sacrifice of thanksgiving. That does not mean only that it consists of hymns and grateful prayers: but it is a sacrifice of thanksgiving because we acknowledge gratefully the great benefits of Christ's sacrifice for us. And it is done with thanksgiving because we have found the sacrifice of ourselves to be a thing of supreme joy.

2. The Eucharistic sacrifice is the highest priestly offering.

(a) That is its unmistakable purpose.

Strangely enough, this aspect is the one that earliest captured the imagination of the Church. The Lord's Supper became a service in which Christians offered themselves, body, soul, and spirit, to God, which was their rational liturgy. It therefore provides just that balance which preaching needs: it seals its impressions, it quickens devotion, and it provides an opportunity for self-obliteration on the part of the preacher and for self-dedication on the part of the people, to which all preaching should lead. It is therefore genuinely evangelistic, and is a better medium for that purpose than any of the newer methods of securing decision.

It impresses upon us, however, that we can-

not offer a true sacrifice unless we do it together as a priestly order. We are too slow to rise to the heights alone. It is in communion with others and with the whole Church of Christ that we make this offering; and therefore we emphasize everything that signifies our union with the Universal and Mystic Body. We bring ourselves as near to the whole Church of Christ as we can. And we attempt this not only for its mystical, but also for its practical effect. For it is at the Lord's Table that Christendom will at last find unity.

But there is more than this needed to make our offering perfect. We must bring our offering into line with the perfect sacrifice of Christ. It is only thus that the Eucharistic Offering can be rightly called sacrificial. In bringing ourselves near the broken Body and the outpoured Blood, we bring ourselves into union with the Eternal Sacrifice and integrate humanity into the full benefit of the Cross. It is this which fills up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. We do this until He comes to sum up all things in Himself, and, having reconciled humanity, lifts it up in one body unto God.

(b) This has been the sole purpose of the revival of the Catholic celebration of the Sacrament in this place.

People talk foolishly of our ceremonial, never without the word jarring upon my ear. Everything done here which could be called ceremonial is done solely for the sake of simplicity, so that we may be moved together; choosing rather actions than words, and prayers than exhortations, because that makes for simplicity.

So now I am going to get down from this

exalted prophetic position and stand upon your level, and turn your way, to enable me to forget you and you to forget me. And I do most solemnly aver that my total intention has been simply to get out of your way and leave you alone with God. If I am priest, it is only by putting myself on your level, and letting my own devotion, using the hallowed forms which centuries have sanctified, help you and lead you nearer to Christ.

This throws a heavy responsibility on you. You may leave me standing there alone, and thus my priesthood will be deprived of all value, for it is the Church and the Church alone that can offer a valid Eucharist. But such responsibilities are precisely what our Free Church principles emphasize, and the true priesthood cannot evade them. You may make this rite an empty form, but you cannot blame the rite for that. That is your business. But in every line of it, in every action, it calls you to your sacred office. And if you are faithful, there will surge up an offering to God, which will not fail to hasten the union of Christ's Church, the evangelizing of the world, the reconciliation of nations, and the coming of the Kingdom of God. And then Something will make answering response, using this bread and wine as the material link. All heaven will be brought near. Someone will touch our foreheads. Something will brush our lips. But of that it is not lawful for a man to speak.

How the Cross Reconstructs Personality

“I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live: and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me.”—GALATIANS ii. 20.

SINCE the outbreak of the war evangelical preachers have been asking whether it is not at last possible for us to understand how some one else may have to die to save us. Surely all the intellectual quibbles about substitution and the squeamishness about redemption by blood will be suppressed by the awful spectacle of suffering so willingly borne by those who are laying down their lives in blood and agony for our safety.

There is some justification for the impatience with which these questions are now being forced home. Behind the unwillingness to accept Christ's death for our sakes there often lurked spiritual pride and offended self-sufficiency; the irritation at some of our devotional language

about the cross, and the repulsion from the realistic presentation of the Crucifixion was often nothing more than decadent hyper-æsthesia and a refusal to consider the facts of life. But the statement of evangelical views of the Atonement must also bear the responsibility due to their lack of thought and ethical obtuseness ; for it has had the effect not only of keeping thousands from considering the cross, but also of doing not a little to make the cross of none effect. It is little use to plead for the acceptance of a series of explanations of how Christ bore our sins, which are not only meaningless and never applicable to our own exercise of justice and forgiveness, but which come to be in time rejected by the conscience which has been itself born again at the cross. There have been not a few tragedies where pious souls have come to feel that the very thing which saved them, and on which they cast their early hope, seemed on closer examination to be a fiction of justice and ethically unsound ; for it is not always easy for people to discern that spiritual intuitions are largely independent of their intellectual explanations. Has the appalling spectacle of Europe sodden with the blood of its splendid youth done anything to relieve these well-known difficulties ?

The illustration provided by the soldiers' sacrifice will, it is to be feared, provide only a

temporary and sporadic relief. For it will be noted that the illustration of the battlefield, besides containing elements that were altogether absent from the purpose and fact of the cross, only illumines the element of martyrdom in the cross; which has certainly been the one remaining thing that the modern mind was clinging to, but which has been also the one thing that evangelicals have repudiated as entirely inadequate. They used to tell us that the explanation of martyrdom failed to bring out the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice, and really made the cross only a symbol of the triumph of evil and the despair which is at the heart of things. Indeed this new illustration from the sacrifice made in this war, however heroic and voluntary, will do nothing but increase the difficulties that have been felt about the Atonement. In a few years' time it is more than likely that we shall be mourning this war as tragically unnecessary, all its glorious sacrifice an offering made to a great delusion, and the dangers from which it was to save us imaginary; which is exactly what has been so often felt about the cross: where was its necessity, what was in God that had to be propitiated? And the only too probable fact that the war itself may achieve none of the things which inspired so many to risk their all to attain, again intensifies one of the great ethical difficulties of

the cross, namely, to show the nexus between the cross and the regeneration of the soul; for it is this very failure of sacrifice to achieve its intended ends that the war may illustrate all too terribly.

And yet, like all attempts to read the meaning of the cross, these illustrations only need just a turn to take us to the very heart of the catholic interpretation of the cross. It seems to be generally overlooked that a martyrdom often effects a moral awakening in others. It is not until we see the best elements in Athens putting Socrates to death that we know the whole Athenian polity to be corrupt and obsolete. If Jesus died only as a martyr, that of itself throws a penetrating light upon the religion and justice of His time. From such disclosures there may emerge far-reaching reforms. And if we could only see that the youth of Europe is not dying to secure our safety from our enemies so much as dying for the sins of civilization, for the sins of nations, for our sins, that would guarantee a repentance, which at present is far to seek.

This gives us the clue to discover how the cross as a historic fact comes to create a revolution in personality; in short, how the cross saves in the only intelligible and ethical way. And the first thing we have to trace is

HOW THE HISTORIC CROSS IS REALIZED PERSONALLY.

1. The historic fact is of primary importance.

(a) The ignoring of this has lost grip with reality.

The preaching of the cross has been almost entirely doctrinal and abstract. Sin has to be punished; Christ bore the punishment of sin; therefore the sinner goes free. But if this statement is accepted there is no guarantee that the man is saved from sin in anything but an abstract sense. For the great change of soul which is necessary, theology has either had to assume a regenerative work done in addition, for which the death of Jesus was a preliminary whose necessity is due to something mysterious in God beyond our understanding; or the change of soul has to depend upon the sinner's gratitude for the work done for him, which leaves regeneration dependent upon the most fickle of human qualities, and that in turn dependent upon the sinner being able to realize what the dangers were, and why it was necessary to take this means of rescuing him: a chain weak at every link.

The historical conditions are not irrelevant. It was no accident that Christ came into the world when He did. Our Scriptures have familiarized us with the idea that it was in

the fullness of time, and we think we can discern this in the actual historical conditions. But He also *died* in the fullness of time, and the historical conditions ought to illustrate that also. What the cross does in its particular setting is to reveal the opposition between God's way and the way of the age; the revelation cutting clean across all the strata of history and disclosing their absolute incompatibility with the thoughts of God in the fact that the tendency of even the best movements of the times ended in repudiating and murdering Jesus Christ.

The ignoring of the historical setting of the cross has had costly results. It has left the condemnation of sin made at the cross quite vague, instead of being itself a revelation of what sin is and what is sin; it has enabled us to employ the crucifix as a symbol of the sort of justice administered in a French Law Court, and to decorate battle-flags and war-medals with the cross, as if it stood for the sacrifice of one's life in attempting to take another's; with the consequence that Christianity seems utterly unable to re-read itself in current history or shape the movements of the age.

(b) The historic cause of Christ's death was threefold.

Jesus stirred against Himself the chief reli-

gious influences of His day. And that, not because He was an iconoclast, for He came to fulfil, not to destroy, but because He claimed certain conclusions from that religion which its most earnest professors and stalwart defenders could not see and would not permit; their resistance being due partly to ignorance, partly to fear, and partly to pride. The implications Christ drew were what we can conveniently summarize as universalism. He claimed the privileges of Israel's faith for foreigners, and narrowly escaped being murdered in His own town for doing so; He extended the invitations of God to the sinful, depraved, and outcast, and so aroused the resentment of the Pharisees; He claimed that religion should dominate and direct the whole of life, which brought out against Him the rich, the responsible, and all the leaders.

Jesus also disappointed popular expectation. Palestine was seething with wild hopes and seditious plans. There was an impatient desire for social and political emancipation, and Jesus was obviously in sympathy with the down-trodden and the dispossessed. He laid down principles entirely opposed to the existing order of society and the current method of government. And yet He refused to adjudicate, to legislate, to lift little finger to overturn the aristocracy or to drive the Romans

out of the land. This disappointment has not been particularly emphasized in the Gospel story, but it is there plain enough, for without some turnover in popular opinion it would have been quite impossible for Pilate to have crucified Jesus when Jerusalem was full of Galileans up for the Passover festival.

Jesus failed to get justice done Him by the Roman authority. It would not be fair to blame Roman jurisprudence for the death of Christ; for according to Roman law, as Pilate knew perfectly well, Jesus was innocent. The claim to Messiahship nowhere conflicted with the Imperial government. But then, as always, it is not the law, but the administration, that decides, and Pilate that day delivered a sentence which was a travesty of Roman justice. And yet we must not trace this miscarriage of justice only to Pilate's cringing fears of Tiberius. Pilate knew that if he let Jesus go there would be an uproar, and he was all for quiet at that particular time. It is the exigencies of good government that often sacrifice the reformer, and that particular type of government embodied in the Roman conception of order and the Roman ideal of peace, the best of its time and the model for all subsequent ages, could not afford to let Jesus live.

2. The transition from the historical to the personal consideration is simple and searching.

(a) It is clear that Jesus died because sin was woven into the world's noblest institutions.

This was the first application made by the preaching of the Apostles. Peter charged the Jews with having murdered the Christ of God. He allowed that this was done in ignorance, and that it only followed out their historic attitude. Not only were some of his hearers directly responsible for the condemnation of Jesus, but it was the outcome of the general tendency of their religious outlook. Under this charge numbers were convinced and sought repentance.

The next step in the personal application is made clear to us by the experience of the Apostle Paul. Without accepting the extremely improbable suggestion that the youthful Saul was a member of the Sanhedrin which condemned Jesus, Paul knew perfectly well that if he had been, he would have voted against Jesus, for he had thought it to be his duty to persecute the new sect. Paul felt personally involved in the sin that had ended the career of Jesus.

But all the Apostles come to take the guilt of the sin for which Christ died as their own. The sin of the world, the sin of the age, was also their sin. They began to see that all along, right up to the tree, Jesus had been bearing sin: its shame, its pain, and finally

its penalty. Paul characterizes three grades: weakness, sin, enmity; these necessitated the death of Jesus, for they conspired to kill Him.

(b) We must surely take this to ourselves: He died for *our* sins.

To bring that home to us most speedily we can ask the question whether, if Jesus came to earth now, He would have to suffer again. There seems little room to doubt that between the Church, Labour, and the State, Christ would stand no chance at all. He would be a danger to any Church existing, to many social aspirations, to the Defence of the Realm.

But at the root of all these things is our individual sins. Our compromise, our self-seeking, our carelessness, our timidity, have gone to build up a world order that is at enmity with God. There is no one with a conscience half awake who can feel able to contract out of responsibility.

My weak self-love and guilty pride,
His Pilate and His Judas were.

But we ought specially to notice that it was not gross and rebellious sins which crucified Christ, but some of the best intentions and institutions of the age. It was not the things that we first think of when sin is mentioned, like treason, robbery, sexual vice; it was the sins of the religious, the reformers, the respect-

able ; the sins of prudence, shuffling, meanness ; the sins which are common to us all. If we really want to know why it was necessary for Christ to die, the answer is that the world is made up of people like you and me. This is the first position we have to come to, and if people once get there they can be left to themselves and the cross. But we can trace the steps which show

HOW PERSONAL REALIZATION EFFECTS SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION.

1. The cross goes on to take away the sin it reveals.

(a) This also has been imaged in an unnecessarily abstract way.

The cross is said to remove the burden of guilt, and this by a Divine act. Now under this there lies a truth, but it is often sadly betrayed in statement. Guilt means, strictly, responsibility for sin, and nothing can ever transfer responsibility or alter the fact. Indeed the cross only intensifies the conviction of guilt and increases the burden of it.

Yet the cross has always brought a great relief. We must be sure that the relief is of the right kind. There are some doctrines of Atonement and there are some results of accepting them that make for nothing else but the searing of the conscience. We must be as careful to

exclude the possibility of that as we must to allow for the experience of relief. It cannot be that we are glad to know that some one else has borne the cruel consequences of our sin, which we ought to have borne; that would only make us feel them with double weight. The real truth is that as soon as we see our own sins burdening Christ, so soon we realize that He undertook this burden in order to ransom us from sin and bring us to God.

The cross makes us sure of the fact of forgiveness; not by any unethical ideas of transaction or transference; not by making forgiveness possible, for that would repudiate the teaching of Jesus and the experience of the Old Testament; but by assuring a guilty conscience that, undeserved as it is, forgiveness is nevertheless a fact. For we can see that Christ stepped into the stream of human sin, bore its burden and its consequences because He loved us, loved us while we were weak, while we were yet sinners, while we were enemies. It was love that moved Him to do it; love that sought us in our sins, love that bore with them, love that endured the cruel wrong we did Him.

(b) This deepens into an individual assurance that breaks up the old life. The more we can reckon our sins in the sin of the world which He bore and for which He suffered, the more

we can include ourselves in the love that assumed them. We take further encouragement from His love for the sinful woman, for unfaithful Peter, for the penitent thief, that He would have loved even us. And this ought to be enough to satisfy us. God so loved the world; then He loved me. Whosoever; that covers me.

Yet a more personal realization is open to those who seek it, and is perhaps necessary if we are going to feel what Paul felt about the cross. He speaks here as if he had received some assurance that he himself was in the mind of Christ. This can only be a mystical revelation. It may come as it came to Julian of Norwich who, watching her crucifix, received the assurance as from the lips of Jesus that He would have suffered even more, if it had been necessary, for love of her. It may come to some as in the picture of The Merciful Knight who, kneeling before the cross, feels the Saviour stoop down to kiss him. These are only symbols of an ineffable experience, the most wonderful experience in the world, the assurance that Jesus loves us. Yet it is more common than many would think, and the way to it is open to all those who will spend time before the cross mourning the sins that crucified Christ.

2. This naturally effects a great spiritual transformation.

(a) It changes all our values.

Paul speaks of the change it wrought in him in terms which are awful, but are no exaggeration. He says that he has been crucified with Christ. That must at least mean that he felt something of the spiritual anguish for his sins that Christ had felt over them; that he felt the world for which he had lived was no more, and he himself had died with Christ and risen again; that he felt he was in some sense sharing in the bearing of the world's sin. The cross has never done its full work in us until it has accomplished all that, at whatever pain.

It entails that we can never live the old life again; the self-seeking, worldly, comfortable life. This is what people ought to be feeling about the suffering and death of our soldiers: that they cannot go on living in the same way. And that so few are yet feeling this is a sign that for all their emotional patriotism they have not yet appreciated what has been done for them. If men have done this for our safety, safety becomes a thing too sacred to claim. We must live out on the exposed places, on the dangerous frontiers of life after this. How much more seriously and drastically must we have done with the world-order and the world-ideal which has crucified Christ.

It means living for the same ends as Christ, and taking the same risks; seeking the salvation

of the world, not by going out to slay those who would destroy the world, but by offering ourselves to them as a ransom; laying down our lives not only for our friends, but for our enemies; taking upon ourselves all the danger of loving our enemies, and loving them into something better; a task that has generally only one end for the person who attempts it.

(b) It is this which holds hope of the world's redemption.

Paul speaks here of a positive displacement of personality, a profound psychological change which we cannot interpret too carefully. It is not absorption, it is a life which continues thoroughly personal, but with Christ as its centre: a life intensely self-conscious, but a life no longer selfish. It is some such change that man has come to discern that he needs. There is such a thing as the burden of personality; there is a great hindrance to expressing and releasing all that is in us in the restraint of self-consciousness; and men are seeking wider powers of influence, healing, leadership. But the modern methods look only to the depressing of personality by occultism and hypnotic suggestion. The real cure is to have a Divine Personality as the chief centre of self-reference.

The world needs for its redemption now an order of crucified men; those who have made a complete renunciation of the world, its vanities,

pomps, fame, honour, glory; those who have broken through the delusion of the world's way of redemption by punishment, coercion, armed peace. No one else can help the world at this crisis a step forward. The best of the old ways are only helping it backward.

The thought of our age had somewhat grasped this as a solution for the difficulties it found in the Atonement: that it was only as one was crucified with Christ that the cross really saved. But it took this all superficially, spoke of crosses when only trifling irritations were meant, making being crucified with Christ only a mystical identification with Him. Yet any effort to attain anything more in order to be saved or to save can become morbid and self-righteous. It is only when the realization that Christ died for us, why He had to do that, what it cost Him, and what love inspired it, that the great work is accomplished and the mighty transformation takes place. It is only those who have knelt long before the cross in contrition and penitence who will find themselves suddenly lifted up in His arms to share the fellowship of His sufferings and be crucified with Him.

Faith in God and Faith in Christ

“Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.”—JOHN xiv. 1.

THESE words open what is probably the most familiar passage in our Bible; a passage that has been pored over by countless souls in sorrow and distress of mind. But this familiarity and attraction gives little assurance that the profundity of the underlying idea has been in any measure explored. For, as always with this Evangelist, the language reduced to the greatest simplicity nevertheless expresses fathomless thought.

The truth embodied in these words has been perhaps less sought after than their comfort; partly because it is widely questioned whether we have here the actual words of Jesus. But even if they are to be rejected as such, that does not diminish their truth. Anything like sheer and baseless invention is unthinkable. At the worst we have the words of Jesus passed through another mind which, either through long brooding upon their meaning or by contact with Hellenistic philosophy, had come to translate them not only into

another language, but into another type of thought. I do not know that this suffices to solve the extraordinary enigma of this wonderful work. The contact with a solemn and stupendous mind can be unmistakably felt, and through whatever medium, we are conducted into the innermost sanctuary of the person of Christ.

But the suggestion that the thought has been passed through another mind and has been adapted for a different audience brings considerable help. The claims of Christ are rendered so dogmatically in the Fourth Gospel that they sometimes rouse resentment. But these claims only make explicit what is everywhere indirectly implied in the Synoptics. Christ's teaching is here translated in the light of the faith that He was the Eternal Word of God made flesh. But once this cause of offence is removed by the discovery that the Synoptics unconsciously make precisely the same claims, one can go on to consider the profound philosophical consideration that this Gospel advances in their support.

What is the underlying philosophical consideration here proposed? Christ is made to claim belief in Himself alongside belief in God. It will be noticed that the belief is of exactly the same order and indicates exactly the same attitude towards Christ as towards God. For all for which we have faith in God we are bidden to have faith in Christ. There is no room for any suggestion that faith in Christ means a different faculty employed for a different purpose. For the purpose of faith

Christ is simply placed side by side with God. But when we have recognized this unqualified claim made by thus placing Christ and God side by side, then we can go on to notice the reason given for this equal valuation. This is done in such simple language and yet with such consummate art that a great range of suggestion is covered. Students of the original will notice that, as usual, this author prefers a simple co-ordinating conjunction to express the sense of a dependent clause: "Ye believe in God, *and* ye believe in Me." The nature of this dependence is rendered somewhat ambiguous by the fact that the verbs in each case can be translated either as indicatives or as imperatives. Out of the four alternatives this could be made to yield, only two need to be considered. We can translate: "Ye believe in God, and *therefore* ye believe in Me"; when the second half is made the *consequence* of the first. Or we can translate: "Ye believe in God, *then* believe in Me"—where the one is made the completion of the other. No doubt the extreme simplicity and possible ambiguity of the phrase are deliberately chosen in order to cover as wide a meaning as possible: that faith in Christ is additional to, and yet implied in faith in God. What stands out beyond dispute is that, on either interpretation, faith in Christ is based on faith in God.

FAITH IN CHRIST IS GROUNDED ON FAITH IN GOD.

1. This was certainly so in the primitive appeal of the Gospel.

(a) Christianity came as a message to a people perfected in a theistic faith.

We are continually forgetting that the New Testament is preceded by the Old; or at least we overlook the significance of that. Or we remain content with discovering predictions of Christ in the writings of the prophets or in the symbolism of the Levitical worship. There is a far deeper preparation for Christ to be found than either of these. It is to be found in the prophetic revelation of the true nature of God and in the psalmists' experiences of communion; for it was that faith which quickened the desire to see God face to face.

The purity and perfection of the Hebrew faith has sometimes been denied in order to provide a proper background against which to display the superiority of the Christian revelation; but mistakenly. It has been denied, for instance, that the Old Testament rises to the conception that God is love. And yet we have ascribed to God over and over again loving-kindness and tender mercies! Or again, it is doubted whether the Old Testament has reached a true idea of the forgiveness of sins. It is difficult to see how this can be maintained with the 32nd Psalm before us, with its analysis of every element in sin and its appropriate antidote in the grace of God; with the 51st Psalm and its profound sense of guilt and its penetrating psychological discernment of what alone can make the heart clean again; with the 103rd Psalm and its declaration that "as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed

our transgressions from us." We cannot ask that they should be removed any farther. It has sometimes been denied that we rise to a conception of the Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament; that Fatherhood is there only relative to the nation, not to the individual soul. And yet this is met by the explicit declaration: "Thou art our Father, though Abraham knoweth us not."

These denials have sometimes been supported from statements in the Fourth Gospel, especially by the saying: "No one cometh unto the Father but through Me." But then it is forgotten that this need not necessitate contact with the historic Jesus, for the Evangelist identifies Jesus with the Word who was always in the world and with the Light that lighteth every man. And there are other utterances of the Gospel which assume that a man must come to Christ through the Father: "No man can come to Me except the Father draw him"; "If God were your Father ye would love Me"; "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

(b) Christianity must be something very unique if it is to surpass this revelation.

It is true that the Old Testament had been crying out for something more. This is seen not only in the open desire for the Messiah, who is to be in some way a manifestation of God Himself; but also in the inability of the Old Testament faith to sustain itself against the invasion of scepticism. Doubt is creeping in in many of the Psalms, it can be traced here

and there in the Proverbs, it burdens the Book of Job, and it is the real motive of the Book of Ecclesiastes. These witness to the bankruptcy of Israel's faith and the discovery that something more was needed.

The New Testament is written in the joyful belief that "the something more" has been given. And it does not sufficiently explain that confidence to say that it is the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah that is the cause of its having been written; for Jesus is reticent about the Messiahship, and there is no consistent view of what Messiahship involves. Are we to look for the something more in an additional revelation; in some new teaching given by Jesus? If so, wherein is His message essentially different from that of the prophets? Some of the Beatitudes come straight from the Old Testament. If Jesus contrasts the true religion with mere ritual, that had been done by the prophets before Him. When He enunciates the two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thy neighbour as thyself," He is quoting the Old Testament literally. He formulates the golden rule of conduct: "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you"; but He does not claim that this is anything new; it is simply the law and the prophets in a nutshell. If there is any different basis for forgiveness in the teaching of Jesus from that in which the psalmist rested, it would be difficult to say

what it is. It has been suggested that Jesus taught a different *theodicy*, a new way of interpreting God's providence; but there is little that is not already found in the Book of Job.

What, then, was the something more? Was it that the teaching of Jesus was reinforced by the wonderful congruity of His life—that He was His Gospel? Even that does not seem to take us much farther than the 53rd of Isaiah. There it is obvious that the writer has come to the doctrine of vicarious suffering as he saw it set forth in the actual career of some persecuted saint. There is nothing adequate to justify the New Testament save the belief that Jesus was Himself the Word by which the prophets spake; the faith which before had to rest in God invisible in heaven is now able to rest on Christ visible on earth. Unless in Jesus God Himself is confirming by His actual presence what He had announced previously by messengers, the New Testament does not meet the situation, is not worth the paper it is written on.

2. The Christian religion must speak to very similar conditions to-day.

(a) There is a very widespread belief in God which seems to be independent of faith in Christ.

There is not only the case of the great heathen faiths, which through contact with the Christian faith are beginning to reform themselves, which have yet all along contained a revelation that was not dependent on Christianity. There is not only the case of those who profess to get on without Jesus

Christ in their worship of God, while all the time it is the face of Jesus Christ that is before their mind. There is a growing number of people whose idea of God is remarkably pure and the consciousness of Him quite clear, who confess that they not only do not need Jesus Christ, but constantly find Him a complication in their scheme. They prefer a purely spiritual God and desire no incarnation. Even in more Christian circles there is the idea that Jesus is only a way to God and not the very truth and life of God; one therefore who can and ought to be surpassed by a more perfect faith. While for the great majority of Christians it is questionable if the significance of the Nicene faith is at all understood or would be thought to be worth the controversy it occasioned.

And there is no need to deny that this may be a genuine faith. It would not only be uncharitable and impolitic to do that; it would involve our denying the reality of the Old Testament faith as well. If this modern faith in God be interrogated, it will be found to consist of a very strong belief in God as Love and Light, sometimes with a very warm sense of His personality as companionable and near. There is a filial trust in His Fatherhood sufficient to leave life in His hands and to trust where one cannot trace. There is a real understanding of the forgiveness of sins as assured in the very consciousness of sin, for this could only be known by the continued presence of God within.

The revival of mystical Theology has pro-

vided this faith with a complete defence. By the *via negationis*, as the philosophers call it, or by *introversion*, as the mystics call it, one can pass from the sense of error to the immediate perception of the truth against which alone could any error be discerned; from the sense of sin to the holiness against which alone it could be made visible; from the consciousness of imperfection to the Infinite and Eternal from which alone we could know ourselves as finite and mortal. And these ideas, which may seem to some mere philosophical concepts, can be made to glow with life by constant brooding and deepened sensitiveness, until one is sure of God not as mere background, but as active, pressing in upon oneself, continually redeeming the soul; a Christian and almost a Trinitarian conception of God as Father, Incarnate Son, and Sanctifying Spirit. By acts of concentration, realization, and identification one can move into a union with God which leaves nothing more to be desired. There are steps within every mind which take us out on to the roof of our being, and we are under the sky set with eternal stars; one can soon learn how to be still and hear the tides of God sweeping in healing flood round our island soul; and soon the silence against which our noisy little lives are set becomes vocal with the communication of God.

(b) Yet neither can we shut our eyes to signs of incompleteness that manifests itself in this type of religion.

There are great dangers of its drifting into vagueness. Because there is a necessity of

showing that it owes little to Christianity, other categories than those of Christ, or Incarnation, or Personality are naturally sought for. God becomes the ALL. What this may mean those who find great inspiration in the idea must be left to expound. But there can be little doubt that this tends to deprive the idea of God of all distinction; and soon the reaction is found in the slackening of one's moral fibre. Or if this tendency towards pantheism is avoided, then God comes to be regarded as beyond all categories and He becomes the NOTHING. "I believe in God," a man confessed the other day, "but I cannot tell you in the slightest what I mean by God." All the great words of religion are emptied of their content: prayer, salvation, immortality; God loses all distinctness. And if both these extremes are avoided and God is conceived as personal, the deeper Self, then there creeps in the danger that what one worships is after all only oneself, the idolatrous goal of not a few modern religious movements.

And in all these types there soon begin to manifest first apathy and then pessimism. With such a religion there is no desire to propagate. Foreign Missions come to be regarded as a mistake, for we have nothing to say to the followers of the ancient religions, nothing that they do not already know as well as we. Then Home Missions begin to be suspect, for these ideas have little power over those who are fallen and have lost their self-respect. Then the idea of the Church is questioned; for there is no possibility of fellowship where

the bond of faith is one that may be taken to mean anything or nothing. The strain of pessimism may be detected in the unavoidable pathos of the hymns that have been written under the influence of this supposedly broader faith. They make better poems than the old hymns, but they are difficult to sing; they are too sad and plaintive. No one would wake men up at night to shout these hymns as carols in the street. You can only make real carols with a firm belief in the Incarnation.

The unstable character of much modern religion is revealed in the inner history of the New Theology controversy. For thousands of men and women that movement was a rehabilitation of Christianity when they had come to think it was obsolete. It meant to many the clearing away of difficulties because the idea of immanence enabled them to see some meaning in the great Christian ideas. Jesus the historic person was conceived in the light of the Eternal Christ, and the Incarnation as the flowering forth of the immanent life of God in the soul of man. But it must also be confessed that these explanations were no help to others, and only led them farther away from the historic faith of Christendom. They saw that there was nothing special in Christianity. This diverse interpretation was seen in the opposite effects on different persons; some finding their way back to the Catholic faith as the one hope of giving some meaning to things, interpreting what was immanent by the Incarnation, rather than vice versa; and others gradually giving up Christ altogether,

identifying God only with what they saw working in the phenomenal world, and at last lapsing into the belief that the only God is man. People were drawn together by the New Theology only to fly the more violently apart. It was symptomatic of what was really needed.

FAITH IN CHRIST IS THE COMPLETION OF
FAITH IN GOD.

1. Because we believe in God we find that we must go on to believe in Christ.

(a) Without that advance, we are left quite indefinite in the object of our faith.

The idea that Christ is merely a way by which we pass beyond Him to reach the goal, that Christ brings us to God, only then to vanish from the picture, is an abstraction from half the New Testament confession of the meaning of Christ. For there not only do we come to God through Him, but God comes to us through Christ. It is not the Godhead of Christ that we now insist on so much to-day as the Christhood of God. To say that Christ is God does not tell us anything: to say that God was Christ is a revelation.

Moreover, this is not a question of abstract theology. To allow that there may be some difference between Christ and God, even if it is a difference of something more, re-introduces uncertainty into the very heart of the Christian religion, both as to the nature of God and as to the Divine way of redeeming the world. Alongside faith in Christ, in His

teaching, in His way of life, in His Cross, there is allowed to intrude faith in quite another sort of reality, which is deemed to be God and therefore superior to Christ; but which often turns out to be only faith in force, faith in necessity. There is little doubt that Liberal Protestantism, however unwittingly, has allowed room beside Jesus Christ for another deity to be slipped in; the god of the State, where Jesus has no authority; the god of military necessity, where the teaching of Jesus does not apply: a real Prussian deity. Unfortunately his worship is not confined to Prussia. He is the god of this world.

(b) But the purer our faith in God, the more we find faith in Christ to be necessary.

We do need to know what God is like. There is no possibility to-day of finding any basis of reconciliation in faith in God, because the name has come to stand for a multitude of contradictory conceptions. And ultimately it will be found that there is no possibility of identifying God unless we can identify Him with Christ. If Christ was only His messenger, or only like Him, that still leaves room for something else to creep in and corrupt our faith.

Some of us need to have our idea of God radically changed. It should be no surprise that at first Christ may seem in conflict with all that we conceive God to be. A too easy correspondence between our ideas of God and what is revealed to us as God does not always make for confirmation. We are suspicious that the one may be a mere reflection of the other. Hence some of us need to pass through

an experience like Paul and have our idea of God completely shattered by the spectacle of Christ's Cross, until we can come to see there the very wisdom and power of God. Although there must finally be a complete correspondence between the deepest conviction of the soul and the highest revelation of God, we may need to go through great changes of thought and pass through agonies of upheaval before we reach agreement. For what some of us worship as God the New Testament would call the devil.

But even if our ideas of God have been purified until they are true representations of what He is, we need the assurance that they are not the mere creation of our own minds. One can construct a beautiful Utopia on paper, but that is quite another thing from bringing it to existence in a rough world like this. We can construct an image of God which is of great comfort and inspiration, and before which we can worship endlessly. But, at last, at all costs, we must know for certain whether these ideas correspond with reality. It is not enough to have the inner light; we also need to see the Light coming into the world. It is not enough to have a great word of God; we must see the Word become flesh.

2. If we believe in God it is easy to believe in Christ.

(a) How could God withhold from us this our sorest need?

Nothing less than to become man for us would suffice to reveal Himself to us. There can be no final faith in a life like this if God

remains distant and invisible. And we can believe that He would take such means to reveal Himself, not simply enough to satisfy a profound philosopher, but such as the plain man could grasp; not what would only serve in a clear, cool hour, but what would stand the stress when the storm was bearing down upon us and our anchors were beginning to drift. In this life, and especially in these days, how can we help sometimes wondering whether there is a God? And then we remember that at least there was Jesus Christ, and our anchor grips a rock and holds.

How else could God cheer us in the great adventure and stern endurance of life save by Himself submitting to its discipline and its limitation, walking by faith as we have to walk, steering as we have to steer, by moral light alone? And not only so, but for our complete content for this strange life we need to know that it was only in a nature like ours that God could show forth all His glory, and only in this life that He could manifest the wisdom of His mind and the might of His love.

(b) Belief in Christ is therefore the great advance we need to make.

What man needs to-day is a more definite conception of God. And this not for our comfort and assurance only, but in order that we can build the world on new lines, in order to give us something on which we can venture all. It is a new idea of God that the world is needing. And for this Christ has no competitors. The danger of anything other, or

anything less, is now seen. Our uncertainty about God has betrayed us; the wonder whether after all there is not something else beside Christ which we have to fly to in a crisis. Christianity is brought up against the old problem, not this time as a merely intellectual one, but as the most practical issue before the world: how far Christ is a clue to God.

If we have believed in the Infinite, we must now go on to see that there is no infinite but the moral. If we have had faith in the Omnipotent, we must now go on to see that there is nothing mighty but love. If we have believed that the being of God is glorious and majestic, we must go on to see that there is nothing so glorious to God as to live this life of ours, nothing so majestic as for Him to consent to death and to rule mankind from the Cross. This is the only true God, and this is eternal life. All else is a castle in the air, a house built on the sand.

This gives us something more glorious than the highest Theism. Theism believes in God. Christianity believes in God made man. That is, we believe in man, in life in this world; not as they are, but as they can be when filled with God. Therefore we are in touch with a power that can change human nature, move mountains, swing history on to a new course. This is a faith by which you can conduct a revolution. And remember that we have to choose between a revolution founded on unbelief and despair and a revolution founded on faith and undying hope. And we must choose now, in this great hour of crisis.

The Church of Three Dimensions

“The length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal.”—REVELATION xxi. 16.

THIS is a symbolical description of the Church of Christ. It is only symbolical, and we must remember that a symbol is used to suggest an idea, and must not be taken for a description that we are to image with our mind's eye. For, as a picture, it would be monstrous: a symmetrical cube 1,300 miles high. And however beautiful the suggestion of the pearly gates, and the twelve jewelled foundations, and the golden streets may be, it is only so when they are taken as symbols; as descriptions they would give us a city neither useful nor artistic.

We must not forget either that the names of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's Wife, can mean only one thing: the Church of Christ, whose foundation is the Apostles and whose light is the Lamb. There is no temple in the city, because it is all temple; indeed, the very holy of holies, as the cubic shape reminds us. But it is a Church which, if it is to be thought of as a definite society, is open to all the nations to bring their glory there, or if it

may be symbolized as a city, with walls reaching up to the heavens, yet it must have three gates on every side, so that men may enter in whatever their race, temperament, or position, and from whatever direction they may approach. The gates are left always open to show that the city is perfectly secure from attack without and allows perfect liberty within; one is free to go in or out at any time. All that attracts those who are worthy to be its citizens, and all that keeps out those who have no place there, is its light, brighter than the sun, more beautiful than the moon; for only holiness can see the beauty of the Lamb, and only holiness bear the light of God.

But we are to confine ourselves to the three dimensions. The writer has left us free to interpret them as we will. And there seems nothing so satisfactory as to let them stand for the continuity, the comprehensiveness, and the sanctity of the One, Holy, Catholic Church.

THIS REPRESENTS THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH.

1. These have hitherto been sought in opposition.

(a) The Catholic ideal stands for continuity.

No Church to-day can claim to be catholic in the original or in any legitimate sense. "Catholic" means belonging to the whole, that Church which is found everywhere, the universal Church. No one division of the Church can now claim to be universal, for none contains within itself the whole congregation of the

faithful, and none can claim to be catholic in the sense that it ministers to the entire spiritual need of man. Each denomination appeals to one side only, to a certain temperament, emphasizes only a certain aspect of religion.

What the modern Catholic has to fall back upon is continuity. He claims that his Church is always the same, wherever you go and in whatever age you find it. And he bases that claim upon two external marks: the historical succession and the preservation of similar forms of worship. Step by step you can trace this Church back by actual contact to St. Peter himself, in the consecration of its bishops, the ordination of its priests, the confirmation of its members—an unbroken link with Christ. And despite all the changes which time has wrought and growth demands, an early Christian would find himself on familiar ground if he could enter a Catholic church to-day. If Jerome or Athanasius or Augustine could come back to our world, there would be nothing he would be able to understand in our language or our modern life until he went into a Roman church, and then he would hear the old tongue, witness the same rites, find the priest wearing the very dress worn in Rome, Alexandria, or Carthage all those years ago. "Here was the old business, being carried on by the old firm, in the old way," as Tyrrell would say.

(b) The Puritan stands for holiness.

He respects the idea of continuity, he believes in the one Church coming down all through the ages, but he does not agree with the Catholic idea of how this continuity is to be displayed.

The mere tactual contact of the laying on of hands, even if it could be proved, seems to him a very mechanical way of conceiving the transmission of grace. God communicates with the soul direct and by purely spiritual means. The rite of the Roman Mass, in which the Catholic sees the One Sacrifice offered all through these years, does not impress the Puritan. He would say that if Jerome and Athanasius and Augustine could find themselves at home at a celebration of the Mass to-day, Peter and James and John, much more important persons, would find it wholly incomprehensible. What matters in the repetition of the Lord's Supper is whether it preserves a true copy of the original institution, and whether the recipient has faith in Christ; then and only then may he receive Christ after a spiritual and saving fashion.

What the Puritan falls back upon as the standing mark of the Church is Life; the typical life produced by Christ—namely, holiness. That cannot be conveyed from without. History shows that it is limited to no particular channel. There may be a succession going back to St. Peter of those who make the same confession; but that moves from heart to heart, not from hand to hand. There is an apostolic succession, but it is that of holy men, and it is this succession which constitutes the living Church of Christ, whose members are known to God alone, of which the one infallible sign is the reappearance of the holy life.

(c) The Liberal stands for comprehensiveness.

He criticizes the Puritan because he still goes back to the past for his examples. He is inclined

to regard the New Testament as a book of regulations by which he is to guide his life and reconstruct the Church. But he fails to recognize that the New Testament deals with only a part of the life of the Church, and describes an era which is itself in motion, and is quite arbitrarily cut off from that which went before and from that which follows. Why not go back before St. Paul introduced the sacramental notions and the idea of an organized Church to the more fluid thought and practice of the Acts of the Apostles ; why not go back to the life of the disciples while Christ was still alive, before there had been any confession of Messiahship, and Jesus was still the Master, not Saviour and Lord ? In the idea that Christianity was legislated for at a certain time and that "all the rest is corruption, the Puritan is on impossible ground. And in insisting upon holiness he relies too much on external tests. He wants adherence to a system of belief ; demands that a certain experience shall have been gone through, consciously and in a certain order ; makes the difference between the Christian and the worldling to consist in slight differences in dress, behaviour, or the recreations and amusements which may be indulged.

The modern sees the great revelation of God going on now, and outside the Church, in the progress of thought and the elevation of morals. He would not confine faith in Christ to any confession whatsoever, but to sharing the spirit of Christ and living for the same ends. It is the living present and the future that he cares for ; it is by these that he would guide thought, and

he would construct his Church as the occasion demands. He is generally not opposed to any form of faith or Church, so long as it is not intolerant. When any Church excommunicates another, or any number of Churches regard non-Church members as thereby outside Christianity, he profoundly dissents. But he recognizes that most people want a Church of some sort, and that what suits one apparently does not suit another. He is only impatient at the erection of barriers between Church and Church, and especially between the Church and the world.

2. It is becoming clear that these things ought to be sought together.

(a) Each by itself has failed for want of the others.

Each ideal has been sought in opposition to the others, and this has not only given us very partial views of Christianity, but has ended by reducing the Church to entire ineffectiveness. The spectacle of the Church of Christ to-day is deplorable in the extreme. Its strength is wasted over internal strife and in competition, when what is needed is to present a united front to the forces of evil and to cover the whole world with the knowledge of her glorious message. But in our divided condition no one can even gather what that message is. We do not know what Jesus Christ means for to-day, or what He would have us do in the greatest crisis that has ever befallen the world. However careless and unconcerned most Christians are about Church unity, even the world wishes that the Church would find some means of pulling

together. There is a growing opinion outside the Church on this subject which we ought to listen to: not to mention some greater impulse, surely, from within. But Christ has nearly always had to speak to His Church from without.

And it is easy to trace the ineffectiveness of the isolated ideal to the very fact that it is pursued to the neglect of the others. With his insistence on continuity the Catholic is apt to have his look too much turned backward. His forms, his creeds, his government, while displaying a most remarkable tenacity, prevent any movement whatsoever and whencesoever inspired. We may sometimes be glad indeed that the Catholic Churches have so resolutely refused the surrender of fundamental elements of the faith clamoured for by contemporary thought, and often granted by other bodies, only to find that thought had changed again, in such a way as to reveal the demand to have been temporary or mistaken. But if the Catholic Churches had given more time to explain the meaning of their faith and showed how it still held good in modern terms and for modern times, instead of presenting distressed and inquiring souls with a creed to be accepted as it stood, would there ever have been these unfortunate surrenders of vital elements of the faith? Catholic, alas, has often come to mean merely conservative. The Puritan, without concern for continuity, too easily passes into sectarianism, cutting out little cardboard models of Churches, trying experiments on which history has already pronounced a sufficient verdict, and frequently ending up in

a dangerous individualism and a soul-destroying Pharisaism. The attempt to secure a holy Church by tests fails in the end to produce the characteristics of Christian saintship at all. And the Broad Churchman, despite the wide sympathies he professes, often seems able to understand anything except definite Christianity. He dilutes the faith until it loses all power, he broadens it until it wears very thin. His well-meant efforts have not christianized the world; they have only secularized the Church; the effects of which are now sufficiently discernible and disastrous.

(b) We want these dimensions all together and each equally emphasized.

I cannot content myself with a Church which cuts itself off from the present and regards the whole history of the Church from A.D. 100 to 1517, or 1662, or last week, as an interregnum of the Holy Ghost, during which there is nothing for us to learn or emulate. If I could not feel that I belonged to the Church which produced Augustine, Francis, and Pascal, as well as Luther, Bunyan, and Wesley, I would refuse to belong to any Church at all. If I am not allowed to have any sympathy or feel any attraction towards the faith and forms of millions of my fellow-Christians, but must keep up towards them a perpetual attitude of protest, hostility, and suspicion, then I have allowed myself to be captured by a sect, and whatever gifts of the Holy Ghost be mine to be bought for the benefit of a coterie. But, on the other hand, I do not want to belong to any Church which excludes any soul from the saving mercy of God unless

it has been baptized, submits to its government, and subscribes to its decrees, or which holds that, without the ordination of a historic episcopate, sacraments are no sacraments at all. But while this prevents me from going over to Catholic Churches which in many other respects have my sympathies and hold my heart, it does not enable me to find Broad Churchism by itself alone to be any more complete. It makes its standards too much the temporary instead of the eternal; it steers by the currents instead of by the stars; in choosing a circle as wide as possible it forgets the need of describing its circumference from a centre of conviction; it is in danger of explaining Christ by the world rather than the world by Christ; it makes far too light of a historic body, a definite society, within, but not of, the world, a distinctive attitude to life which can only be based upon a fixed and final faith.

CAN WE WORK TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF THAT CHURCH?

1. We must first have clearly in mind what we are after.

(a) There are some ideas of the one Church that fall short of the ideal.

Toleration is a great gain, and a necessity for further advance, but it is insufficient of itself. We Nonconformists have had to suffer so much from intolerance, have had to strive so hard for the right to worship God according to our conscience, that we are apt to think we are the only people who believe in tolerance, and are tempted to think tolerance is all that

we need to secure. We must not forget, however, that the two other ideals of the Church, beside the Puritan from which we derive, have had to be fought for not without suffering and martyrdom. We gained toleration before it was granted in this country either to Roman Catholics or Unitarians. And toleration may be gained from the State long before it is really granted by one Church to another. It is not only Catholic Churches that have sinned in saying that all others constitute no true Church. There are Nonconformists who will not grant that Rome is a true Church, and who look upon any one going over to the Church of England as equivalent to a fall from grace. But even if we could gain for ourselves, and were willing to grant to others, full recognition of being sister Churches, that should not content us. It is no mark of the true Church for the different ideals to be developed in isolation, each going its own way, without correction or filiation from the others.

Federation is sometimes all that it is felt we can hope for: the uniting of the Churches for specific objects on which all are agreed; such as the observance of the Lord's Day, Temperance, Social Reform, and—one wishes one could add—Peace. This affords a splendid chance of getting to know one another as individuals, and it is of itself almost certain to create the desire for a closer co-operation. For who can rest content with an agreement upon these, after all, external and peripheral matters, while we may not pray

together or sit down at the same Table of the Lord? This does not mean that we instantly demand these concessions from our Catholic brethren, or that it is wise to attempt intercommunion with individual members of other Churches; nothing but corporate recognition will content us. However much we may regret the practice of the Romans not to pray with us, or the decision of the Anglicans that they may not receive the Communion at our hands, it is no policy of ours to induce individuals to break the obedience they have promised to their ecclesiastical superiors.

And even if we could secure a great measure of corporate reunion, to which I myself look as the only satisfying ideal, there would still be the question of our relationship to those who want to follow Christ, yet cannot accept Church doctrine or custom. We have got to secure that the Church is at least as catholic as the heart of Christ, and excludes none whom He would have welcomed. And we cannot think that the extremes of demanding complete acceptance of all the Church teaches, or of making no demand of confession of Christ and of allegiance to His Church, are either of them a solution of the problem.

(b) Nothing but the ideal of one comprehensive Church is worth striving for or caring about.

If there is one lesson which Church history teaches, it is that this is the true ideal. The great schisms of the Church, of which it can never be said that one side only was to blame,

show conclusively that the idea of uniformity, whether in rule, or doctrine, or worship, was being pressed too far. But it also does show that these divisions *were* schisms, the tearing away of one side from another, leaving both to develop an unbalanced and extreme position, the defects of which soon began to manifest themselves. What is obvious is that we want a Church with room for the various positions to live side by side, correct one another, and fuse into a richer unity.

Its very difficulties seem to show that this is the true ideal, not only because they forbid us to attempt to engineer a mere diplomatic compromise, but also because these difficulties sometimes drive us to despair of any human plans whatsoever. This Church will certainly have to descend upon us from above, and be the work of God. But the very fact that we are driven back upon supernatural hopes for this ideal, when others could be secured by various arrangements, brought about by the lapse of time, or dictated by external necessities, shows that it is the Divine ideal. It is to a recognition by all Churches of the shame done to our Lord by our disunion, and to our awakening to His call to meet at the Cross, that we have to look for any impulse that will carry this thing to triumph.

There is, however, some hope for such a realization in the growing recognition that the different Churches each stand for some definite element which must be represented in the true Catholic Church; do witness to some truth which is integral to the faith once delivered

to the saints; but still more to the recognition that, just where we fail to follow the Churches with which we disagree most, it is there that we have to try to understand why they retain ideas or practices we dislike, and what elements of truth there may be in them. It is not in the things in which we agree that we are to look for the real solution, but in learning from one another the meaning of our disagreements.

2. This serves to show what are the lines of preparation.

(a) There must be a movement of appreciation and appropriation.

There must be something in the Papacy beyond selfish domination; in the historic episcopate beyond mere mechanical transmission; in the doctrines of transubstantiation beyond mere magic. And on the other hand there must be something in the Protestant refusal to admit infallibility, in the Congregational demand for the freedom of each individual Church, and in the Quaker witness that sacraments are not necessary. There is obvious need both for an authoritative priesthood which owes all its power to its acting as representative of the whole Church, and also for a prophetic ministry free to speak forth the vision of God.

Is it impossible to conceive that these opposites could ever be harmonized? I do not believe that it is. I do not see why we should not have beside congregational liberty of worship and the congregational choice of its ministry a recognition that certain elements of worship form the staple and enduring parts,

whatever else be added or left out. Why not a Eucharist which *denies nothing*, but leaves room for the highest interpretation of the words of institution: why not every expression of devotion allowed, but not insisted upon? So long as ordination does not pretend to give what only Christ's touch can give, but is the solemn recognition and sealing by the whole Church of one's call, I do not mind submitting to a series of ascending ordinations. So long as the claim is not made on a doubtful historical basis, on grounds of legality, or enforced by penalties, I can see no objection to Christendom having a centre and a visible representative head; and no one would think for a moment that Rome had there any conceivable competitor.

And when we try to make the Church as broad as possible, is there not some reconciliation possible between the affirmation and the denial of the great creeds of the undivided Church? Could they not be regarded, in their historical light, as decisions essential in a certain controversy; to be revered, and not to be altered or added to, save by an ecumenical council, and to be received as the doctrine to which the Church is committed on these particular questions; but not employed as tests or used in acts of worship? Let any one be received into the Church on the confession that they believe in the Holy Catholic Church. That does not profess to include all Christians, nor does it demand an immediate acceptance of the whole faith, but it does signify a desire to enter as fully as possible into the great heri-

tage of the Church's faith and to be loyal to the visible historic community. And let the sacraments, and by that I mean all of them, be available for those who need them. I believe this freedom would bring far more people to full agreement with Catholic faith and practice than dogmatism and exclusiveness ever will, and eventually evolve a quite astonishing unity in all things essential. I believe so much in the truth of the Catholic faith and in the value of the Catholic sacraments that I think they can stand competition; and I believe in the power of the Holy Ghost to keep the Church pure without military methods, legal enactments, or external tests.

(b) The Nonconformist Churches have a great part to play in this reconciliation.

Our principles commit us to freedom, but essentially to freedom to follow Christ. We must be careful to see that this freedom is not artificially restricted by our own traditions, preconceived judgments that development must move in this direction, or a belief in our own infallibility. It is not Nonconformity to say that this practice or that prayer shall not be used, but only that it shall not be enforced; not Nonconformity to deny creeds, but to refuse to use them for purposes that give a wrong impression and a false emphasis; not Nonconformity to hold that the inner life must not use any external expression, but that it shall not be restricted to this or that.

It is open to Nonconformity to take up the unfulfilled, the tarnished, the spoiled ideals of the past, and give them a new interpretation,

a new reality, freedom from superstition, magic, and overbearing law. We can recognize any historic order which adds to our sense of continuity, without denying our convictions; we can adopt any proved custom which feeds and establishes the soul's contact with Christ and its hold on unseen realities, without making it the essential and only medium of devotion. We can stand fast for the central truths, while allowing that their only right interpretation to be that which means the most for humanity as a whole. We can build a wall as high as the heaven, but we must have twelve gates open night and day, easy to come in at, and easy to go out by; believing that the light of the City of God is at once its only attraction and its only defence.

This is why the things we are standing for are of no sectarian, local, temporary, or fantastic significance. I believe we are standing for the Church of the future and making a way towards it. Others are watching us with great hope and trembling. What we want is every possible help from those who share in our vision and purpose; great daring in carrying our principles through, and a spirit of constant prayer and holy obedience that the vision may not fade or its perfection cause our spirits to fail.

The Continual Coming of Christ

“Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
—MATTHEW xxvi. 64.

LOOKED at in the light of its contemporary estimate, the trial of Jesus Christ before the Jewish Sanhedrin is an event of no importance whatever. In a little corner of the world, a despised province of the Roman Empire, an ancient ecclesiastical court, now shorn of most of its powers, is trying a prisoner for some obscure theological crime, the point of which would have been unintelligible to a cultured pagan. It would seem to be in dispute whether the prisoner had laid claim to a certain title of “Anointed.” Either because of some very sacred meaning attached to the title by His judges or because of the ridiculous presumption of a provincial peasant in pretending to be a person of any importance whatever, there was an air of intense excitement when the President of the Court put the prisoner on oath to confess whether He had claimed this title. And even the prisoner seemed to labour under some difficulty in replying to the charge. His reply seemed to hesitate between an affirmation and

a question. According to the reports of the trial we possess He said either "I am" or "Am I?"; "So you say" or "That is for you to say." But He immediately wandered off into some wild and untranslatable talk about "the Son of man," "the Right Hand of Power," and "the clouds of heaven." The indignation which thrilled the assembly at these words, the President getting quite melodramatic in his horror, is a little difficult to take seriously since it was accompanied by such obvious satisfaction that the prisoner had now committed Himself. But nothing is so unintelligible as religious terminology, and nowhere is so much made to hang upon so little; so any intelligent pagan who had been present that morning would have commented, and thus dismissed the whole matter.

And not even Caiaphas, the President of the Court, who presumably knew what it was all about and appeared to be stirred to the depths of his soul, could hardly have thought that this was a highly critical affair. The prisoner before him was a wandering prophet of reported sanctity and mysterious power, who had greatly stirred the turbulent crowds of the northern province. His teaching was simple and appealing, but it was mainly taken from the ancient Scriptures, and the people ought not to have been so worked up by things that they could have heard read every Sabbath. Unfortunately this teaching was marred by unsparing attacks upon theological teachers and religious leaders. The message of the Prophet was in itself probably quite harmless; but He indulged

in violent metaphors, like "destroying" and "re-building the Temple," which only led to misunderstanding; and either at His own suggestion or by the adulation of His followers it was being noised abroad that He was the Messiah, the long-promised Prince of Israel. There had been a swarm of these claimants recently, and Rome had conceived them to be dangerous to order and good government. Very few of the more enlightened Jews now retained any faith in the Messianic idea, but it still persisted among the pious, and was now being adopted by the revolutionaries; and the political complexion of the Messianic title, "The Anointed King," was bound to be taken, both by the insurgent elements in the population and by the Government authorities, as a challenge to the Imperial rule. It was a pity that this young man had allowed himself to get mixed up in these matters, but public safety must be the immediate concern of those in authority, and it was necessary to get the Nazarene out of the way. One had to stoop to rather questionable devices to secure witnesses, and Caiaphas had to trick the prisoner into making a damaging confession. But there were national dangers ahead, and it was a question of the safety of the whole nation weighed against the death of a single enthusiast. There must be no hesitation, and there need be no regrets. By the afternoon all was over without any disturbance, and Caiaphas was performing the Passover ceremonies with considerable satisfaction and ease of mind.

Yet, according to subsequent judgment, that

morning's happenings marked the supreme crisis in the world's history: God's chosen people had crucified the Lord of Glory and Caiaphas had written "finis" to his nation's career. The strange hesitation of the prisoner was due to the fact that the title when He was adjured to confess fell short of His own consciousness of what He was, and the mysterious utterance with which He closed His public ministry really meant that from henceforth He assumed the dictatorship of history and would rule all human affairs from the throne of the spiritual world.

THE WORDS NEED TO BE INTERPRETED HISTORICALLY.

1. They have been profoundly misunderstood.

(a) The Early Church looked for a quite literal and material fulfilment.

The first hundred years of Church history were lived in expectation of the "Parousia," the visible return of the Lord to earth to establish the Kingdom of God and the reign of the saints. This was not the expectation of the least intelligent section of Christians only; it was held by the Apostle Paul and dominated the thought of his earlier writings, and it was also held by many of the apostolic fathers.

This opinion seemed to base itself upon most explicit promises of Jesus. He had said that in that generation He would return in glorious manifestation. This expectation was not founded upon a single saying, but formed the substance of much of His teaching. Indeed it might be said that the expectation of an

imminent return coloured the whole outlook of Jesus ; not only dictating the form of His words, but forming the very basis of even His purely ethical and religious teaching.

This belief, despite the apparent delay in its fulfilment, has never failed to exercise an influence over a certain type of mind, and perhaps never so widely as in our own day. The sense of an impending judgment, when all these things would be fulfilled and Christ would be manifested by a glorious apocalypse, has again and again stirred men's thoughts ; notably at the close of the first thousand years of the Christian era. But never until our own times has there been worked out such a complete and detailed scheme of what may be expected to happen. Both Testaments have been ransacked, prophecies fitted together, numbers interpreted until a diagram of the order of the great event can be presented. And the belief has been widespread for decades that the signs of the times point to all this being now close at hand. A turn of the wheel and the whole machinery of the end of history will be set in motion. The belief has even created new sects, of such varied character as the Catholic Apostolic Church and the Millennial Dawnists. A great war was expected to be one of the chief signs, and it is not remarkable that present events have quickened the expectation.

(b) Professional Biblical scholarship has endeavoured to remove this misunderstanding.

The Higher Criticism has made it quite impossible to regard the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation as predictions of the future,

because it has been discovered that they are really symbolical descriptions of contemporary history. Their mysterious numbers had a present reference and fulfilment, and thus the ground is cut away from all efforts to apply them to our own times. But there still remain the Gospels with their frequent and quite explicit predictions.

Investigation of the apocalyptic material of the Gospels has been passing rapidly through different stages. At first it was inclined to treat this material either as interpolations or as misunderstandings on the part of the Evangelists, due to the ideas and expectations that were everywhere current. That there may be interpolations of extraneous material, notably in what has been called "the little apocalypse" concerning the fall of Jerusalem, believed by some scholars to be embedded in the thirteenth chapter of St. Mark and to come from some anonymous prophecy issued shortly before this event, may still be held, though even on this opinion is changing; and that there has been some measure of confusion between the predictions of the Fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world may also be admitted. But recent scholarship regards nothing as more integral to the Gospels and nothing more revealing of our Lord's self-consciousness than these once suspected elements.

But this still leaves open a number of possible interpretations as to what this material means. It may be held that Jesus was completely mistaken, either in thinking that these things were going to happen shortly, or in imagining that

they were going to happen at all. We can discuss even these interpretations very calmly to-day, because not even the highest interpretation of our Lord's Personality, or the religious significance of His teaching, demand that He should be able to see the future or step outside the general scheme of ideas accepted by His age. Indeed, it is essential to a real Incarnation that His mind should be truly human, and it is a comforting revelation that Divine truth and life are not hindered or obscured by intellectual conceptions which a later age may have to abandon. We may have to disregard the form of Christ's expectation, but we have still to discover its religious meaning.

2. All this is made more easy for us to-day.

(a) Both because of current thought and because of the events of our times.

The idea of an inevitable advance of man by measured and unbroken steps to the goal of his aspirations was one that dominated thought a few decades ago; but it was nothing more than a false application to history of a false theory of biological evolution. We now know that Nature often moves along certain lines of development from which she has to retreat and begin all over again; that in the biological world experiments are made that lead nowhere, and that when the right line of advance is found there may be a great and sudden leap forward. The impression that is left by modern biological research is that a great deal of freedom is left to all life, and yet of an overruling guidance which blocks everything but the one right way. So, too, we have come to see that history develops

in spasms and crises, man taking a wrong line which ends in disaster and set-back, and yet out of that very catastrophe the opportunity for greatest advance being offered.

We have recently been able to study the apocalyptic literature just preceding and contemporary with Jesus, and we have discovered that the terminology He used to describe His return is not His own invention. The "Son of man" is a phrase with a long and interesting history, which throws a quite different meaning upon Christ's choice of the term from that which has hitherto prevailed. The "Son of man" was a well-known figure of apocalyptic, the glorious successor to the bestial powers that had hitherto dominated the kingdoms of this world, and His appearing the sign of their passing away. We have also discovered that the striking natural phenomena which we find used to describe the return of Christ is a common device in apocalyptic to denote great political upheavals and national disasters. This has provided a new interpretation of Christ's words, showing that they ought to be taken symbolically, and that only history itself can unfold their full significance. Jesus, as He Himself confessed, knew not the day or the hour. His descriptions of the great event are naturally of a symbolical nature, and that He used so many different symbols and parables shows that no exact description is meant to be conveyed.

But it is the days through which we are living that provide the best commentary on the Gospel apocalyptic. We are seeing Empires trembling on the verge of doom, nations disappearing,

civilization hesitating on the shelf of a bottomless pit. Men's hearts are failing them for fear for what is going to come upon the world, confusion paralyses all minds, the love of many is waxing cold and the faith of some is beginning to fail. And yet there hides within it all the hope that something very wonderful is going to emerge, that the breaking up will be succeeded by a breaking forth, and that overthrow of institutions will be accompanied with the presentation of great opportunities. Our whole thinking has become apocalyptic.

(b) We can begin to see dimly what our Lord meant.

His coming is to be continuous. "From henceforth . . . ye shall see the Son of man coming." This seems to describe a process by which He ever draws near: so that we may say that there is never a day in which He does not draw near, never an age which He does not visit, never a time when He is not at hand. He comes in and through all experiences and all events. He comes through the Spirit when He makes the heart His abode; He is always standing at the door of His Church; He is always sowing the seed; He is always leavening the lump. At midnight, at cockcrow, in the morning: He is always coming.

This perpetual coming is manifested especially in the great crises of the world's history. He was coming immediately, He said. And so He did. He came at Pentecost, in that generation, at the Fall of Jerusalem. He comes whenever the world is threatened by war, when the Gospel is preached to the whole world. Every

historical crisis gives Him a new opportunity of presenting Himself to men. When kingdoms rock to their fall He offers us the chance of welcoming *His* kingdom; when humanity brings upon itself plagues and disasters He presents Himself afresh; when man in his agony attempts to reform the world by violence, He stands pointing out the only way. He comes *with the clouds*, that is with the confusions, the catastrophes, the despair, the doubt of the age. The clouds part, and we see Him at the Right Hand of Power and ready to come to save us.

This manifestation of Himself as coming is critical for us all. It means a judgment on all things false and outworn, and the offering of the true and the new. It is not therefore to the fulfilling of a previously drawn up plan that we have to look; there is more freedom left to man than that; there is always the choice and its consequences; but whatever man chooses, Christ will move more and more surely to His final manifestation and conquest. If the coming Christ finds faith on the earth, then His reign can be accepted and the consummation of human hope draws near; if no one understands, then a mere catastrophe follows, judgment becomes heavier and more destructive; and yet each judgment prepares the way for the final acceptance of Christ; when all shall understand God's dealings, the Son of man shall come and human history shall have achieved its purpose.

THIS INTERPRETATION DEMANDS SPIRITUAL VIGILANCE.

1. Not every one will recognize the Coming of the Son of man.

(a) There are constant warnings about this in the Gospels.

The one conclusion of Christ's whole teaching on this subject is "Watch." There would be no need of such a warning if the manifestation of Christ was to be attended by phenomena which brought overwhelming conviction. That would be out of tune with Christ's consistent attitude towards external vindication. And the parables and similes He uses confirm this: He will come as the lightning that shines from the east to the west; come like a flash and depart as swiftly. Only those who are watching the heavens will discern it. He will come as a thief in the night. The thief not only steals in unawares, but he departs again without rousing us; it is the morning that discloses the fact that he has been—and gone. This all stands for opportunity unrecognized.

Even where there are phenomena accompanying His coming which none can ignore, even then these may produce in different people quite different impressions. The tribes of earth will mourn when they see the sign of the Son of man coming in great power and glory. Others will hail in these signs the promise of redemption drawing nigh. This can only mean that there will be some to lose by what others gain. And this seems to indicate that we are to look for movements which will bring emancipation

to masses of people by ending the tyranny and exploitation by others. We may therefore interpret all genuine movements towards liberation, the uplifting of the long oppressed, as fulfilments of Christ's promise. But those who have vested interests in the ignorance and the enslavement of the people can hardly be expected to rejoice at this coming of the Son of man.

But there may be much in the coming of the Son of man to try the faith and test the patience even of those who have hoped for His appearing. In all the terrible upheavals which are the prelude of the end, in the sufferings and privation inseparable from great disasters, in the overturning of States and the shaking of the foundations of Society, they may lose faith in a Divine Providence, think that God's rule is overthrown and the cause of Christ finally lost. They forget the warning, "Behold, He cometh with clouds," veiled to all who have forgotten what was clearly told beforehand. "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. Be not troubled."

(b) There is a great failure to recognize the meaning of the present hour.

We must know, if we think about it, that we are living in one of the most decisive hours in the history of the world. Yet how little that influences our imagination or fits us for managing the momentous issues. Some see that the British Empire and England's future may be at stake and call for desperate efforts and make drastic demands. There is something more important than these in the balance; the persistence of European civilization and the

continuance of modern culture. We can be sure of one thing, the old halcyon days of the nineteenth century are gone, and we are facing a new epoch. If nations merely think of their own future and security, they will be tumbled into the abyss together; if they would think of humanity they might now enthrone Christ Lord of the world.

Even where the more discerning feel that we are living under the judgment of God, we often have the most trivial causes for that judgment alleged: the desecration of the Lord's Day, the neglect or criticism of the Bible. Few seem to understand that the judgment of God is never an arbitrary imposition. It is always the outcome of the sin itself. And the days we are living through are the natural consequences of our trust in material power, the natural tendency of the false philosophy that has been governing all life, especially in its national embodiments. The State has come to dispute the Divinity that belongs to Christ, and there can be only one end to that challenge. But even when the deeper interpretation of this judgment prevails, few recognize that it also reveals Christ offering Himself as the world's reconciler and deliverer. They place their hope in the very things that have brought the judgment—material force and the supremacy of the State.

The chief cause of this deplorable misreading of events is due to the slumber of the Church. The porter who was set to watch at the gate has been drinking with the drunken and beating her fellow-servants, and

now she slumbers at her post. She has been drinking the intoxicating draught of material power, she has accepted the enslavement of those she was sent to liberate, and now she has no eyes for Christ when He comes to her. Many people simply rejoice at the Church's apostate condition, and jeer at the drunken utterance that comes from her lips at this time. But the truth is that if the Church cannot be wakened and sobered we are all undone. She could have saved Europe from this; she could have saved her at any moment, even after the judgment commenced; she could save her now. If she does not, no one else will. For good or for evil she holds the keys.

2. We must obviously deepen our discernment of the Lord's appearing.

(a) The great difficulty is that we do not recognize Christ when we see Him.

We have been blinded by those partial views of Him which are the curse of modern religion. Some of us see His coming only in the great experiences of religious communion, when He visits the individual soul. Some of us are content with external improvements in the condition of life or the gaining of political liberty or religious tolerance. They can see the coming of the Kingdom of Humanity, but they do not recognize that it is hopeless unless it brings with it a new revelation of Christ. The mystical and the practical are the enemies of one another in our times.

Some of us have learned to see Him in the needs of others and yet remain content with a philanthropy which does not wake men to their

deeper need of Christ. We think it is enough to give a beggar a coin, or be kind to a soul in distress, even if they are not led to find the richness of Christ or know the comfort of the Holy Ghost; with the result that our philanthropy only attaches people to us as parasites and does nothing to introduce men to God. Others find Christ's presence in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, feel Him as they kneel at the altar, and then go away to treat all questions of food and drink as immaterial, and to traffic with human flesh and blood as if it had nothing sacred about it. The sacristy Christ and the Christ of the highways and hedges seem to be at war to our purblind judgment.

(b) We want a recognition of the Whole Christ in all His works.

There is that swift glimpse of Him which is granted at the Sacrament, infinitely precious, intimate, and revealing.

"Swiftly He comes, swiftly He goes,
As by the Sea of Galilee."

For one brief moment His Body is lifted up as on the Cross for all to see; in one simple act He offers Himself to all who are willing to receive Him.

But if this leads to no opening of the eyes to Him walking our streets, appealing to us in those who meet us with their needs, coming on the clouds of heaven, knocking at our doors in these dark and dreadful days: then it is clear, not that the sacrament has been invalid,

but that we have eaten and drunken to our own condemnation.

For some of us these days of judgment will mean death. It will not be given to all of us to see the end of these days and witness the vindication of God. Death is abroad, and some of us have been compelled to face it. For us there is fulfilled another strange word of Christ: "Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, the other left; two men working in the field; the one taken, the other left." But if we are ready, death will be to us not some unlucky chance, not the old enemy, not even an angel, but the Lord Himself. It need hold for us no fears. If it is not the coming of the Lord in glory, it is our coming to glory, our foretaste of that which shall one day flood the world, our sight of Him upon the throne whom one day the tribes of earth shall crown as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Higher Mysticism

“Ye may become partakers of the divine nature.”—
2 PETER i. 4.

IT would be a fair test as to how far we had entered into the spirit and outlook of the New Testament, to see whether we were conscious of a change of atmosphere in turning to Second Peter. The linguistic scholar is immediately aware of certain phenomena in style and vocabulary; along with distinct echoes of the First Epistle there goes an abundance of strange words and phrases not found elsewhere in the New Testament, which, combined with other evidence, has secured its almost universal rejection by modern scholars as a pseudonymous work.

But while these are matters on which the expert alone can pronounce, there is other evidence which ought to be sensible to the devout reader. The attitude towards Jesus Christ is somewhat distant and merely correct. We miss the tender reminiscence and the combination of awe and familiarity which are so evident in the First Epistle. And this is not

simply due to the fact that the Second Epistle is more concerned with combating error, whence a certain hardness of tone would be almost inevitable. There is what appears to be an approximation to pagan phraseology in such terms as "Divine power," "Divine nature," which shows a falling off from the intensely personal apprehension of God which characterizes the New Testament faith. Nowhere else in the New Testament do we find the ambiguous adjective, "divine." It looks as if the author were either a converted pagan, or that Christians were beginning to adopt the language of paganism in speaking of their faith.

Such an adaptation is of course as natural as it was inevitable. A Semitic faith had to be translated into Hellenistic thought if it was going to be intelligible to the pagan world. St. Paul could use this method with astonishing freedom and effect, if the speech on Mars' Hill is at all a reliable report. The Church was eventually compelled to express its faith in the terms of Hellenistic philosophy, and modern theologians have regarded Greek thought as a divinely prepared organ for giving a more exact expression to faith. Those who object to this transformation of faith into theology forget that the moment Christianity touched pagan soil an endeavour was being made to combine it with systems of religious

thought already in existence, in a way in which its distinctive message would have been entirely lost; for terminology which had been degraded by impersonal conceptions of the Divine nature and its too easy application to human beings was now being applied to Christ in a way which surrendered His uniqueness and confused His moral redemption by vague and semi-material conceptions. To combat this, Christian teachers were compelled to define the faith over against these dangers, and yet compelled to use the same sort of terms. And what has to be regretted is that in the transition from Semitic to Hellenistic thought there was a distinct lowering of the personal and moral categories which are the great contribution of the Hebrew mind to religion, and we get in the new thought, in which, for instance, the Nicene Creed is expressed, the use of terms like "substance" or "essence," which conceal rather than solve difficulties.

The transition to this type of thought is clearly marked in the passage from which our text is taken. The Divine power of Christ has given us all we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him, and by realizing His promises we become sharers in the Divine nature. Not only is there a curious indirectness about this, the action of power and knowledge rather than the contact of personality, but the following words show us what

is meant by sharing the Divine nature : it means escaping the *corruption* that is in the world through lust. Though we ought to read these phrases in the light of the Christian experience which the writer undoubtedly possesses, no one who knows contemporary Hellenistic thought can help recognizing the possibility of a lower and semi-physical conception, in which immortality is made equivalent to divinity and is gained by avoiding fleshly corruption. The difference is realized if we see how the Epistle of St. John presents the same truth. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when it doth appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." There personal factor and moral likeness are everything, and what they rest on, the question of "nature," is left undiscussed. The term "sonship" is preferred to sharing the same nature, as more unambiguous and personal, and it is the vision of Christ as He is that effects the change.

MODERN THOUGHT IS GREATLY ATTRACTED BY
THIS IDEA.

1. There is a craving for the closest possible union with God.

(a) It is impossible not to see in this the rise of a more spiritual aspiration.

The great material conquests of our age are ceasing to satisfy the soul of man. The con-

veniences, the luxuries, the relaxations which have transformed the exterior of life have done very little to increase the real happiness of man. The greater comfort of our surroundings does not give ease to the spirit, the possession of power does not satiate our ambitions, our amusements often only leave behind a deeper melancholy.

Yet the idea that the material advance of life is the cause of our unrest, and that a return to simpler conditions would of itself bring rest to the inner life, is a profound mistake. If we thought that the gaining of the whole world would mean the gaining of our own souls, that the abundance of possessions constituted life, then, of course, we are becoming disillusioned. But it is only another mistake to think that the material world is an evil to be denied. Our own Bible, and indeed the whole literature of the ancient world, simply shows us that external conditions have made very little difference to the state of man's soul. In all ages, and in all circumstances, men have felt the ache of the spirit straining after some unknown good. We have simply thought this could be charmed away by work, riches, or amusement.

And now we are all getting thoroughly awakened to the fact that nothing in nature, nothing in life, nothing in human intercourse can answer to the inner need. The soul needs something like itself, and yet something more

than itself; its infinite and perfect Other. But we ought also to remember that it is nature, life, and humanity that have helped to awaken us to that. They have lured us beyond themselves with beauty and the promise of fellowship. Nature has aroused us to the sense of the infinite by the wide swelling sea, the soaring mountain peak, the immensities of the sky revealed by the clouds that sail on its surface or by the stars that light up its depths beyond the strength of sight to follow. Yet all this, glorious and bracing as it is, simply stretches the soul to its measure; it does not satisfy or answer it. Life with its play of personality, its discoveries of affection holds far more. It speaks, it answers, it meets us with understanding. And yet man's pettiness disappoints us, gives us only what we can give, is only what we are. And we want more: the infinite personality, the perfect understanding, the inexhaustible love of God.

(b) Yet this spiritual awakening seeks strange forms of satisfaction in modern religion.

It tends to fall back on some form of self-deification. Deep within the soul itself there can be found those ideas of purity and perfection which we ascribe to God, and the simple process of introversion brings them under contemplation. Behind the sense of error, finitude, and sin we discern the truth, infinity, and perfection, against which alone by contrast could

these failings be seen. These constitute the soul's deepest reality. We should meditate on these and rest on these, for the rest is not our real selves at all. Man in himself is perfect, infinite; he needs no Other to confront the soul within. What is called God is really yourself as you are. It is when we pass from this central reality that we entangle ourselves in delusions; for that is what sin, error, and imperfection are.

The matter is expressed somewhat differently in the frequently met idea that we are "parts of God." No doubt this phrase is used loosely and would probably be altered a little if its accuracy were challenged. With some it is only a loose way of saying that God has communicated His own nature to man, that every soul contains a germ of the Divine, that there is a spark of God in all human nature. But it would be a truer way of expressing that to say that God is a *part of us*, though it is probably safer to secure what is sought after to say that our personality depends upon God confronting us with Himself. To say that we are parts of God might imply that God was simply the sum total of the personalities which make up His parts; a theory that obviously surrenders the reality either of God or of ourselves.

Another type of religious thought starts from the immediate fact of our personal distinctness from God, but sees in this distinctness a sign of a movement away from our true basis. Our

individuality is a fall, a revolt, and we must return to our origin, submerge ourselves in the Divine again, so that God may be all in all. Selfishness is here traced to selfhood, egotism to being an ego, our moral difference to our psychological distinction from God. Therefore any psychic or mystical exercises which obliterate self-consciousness are welcomed as a foretaste of our absorption into God, who under this conception Himself becomes more and more impersonal: a Sea, an Abyss, the Nothing.

2. There is an endeavour to show that this is the real core of Christianity.

(a) It was man's natural unity with God that Jesus came to demonstrate.

Man is a son of God, He was made in the Divine likeness. But man has become unaware, or has never become aware, of his own nature. When this is revealed to him, then all that has been the effect of his wrong notion of himself drops away, and what he really is he actually becomes. The redemption man needs is a revelation of what he is. It is the general acceptance of man as evil, as one of whom nothing good can be expected, which depresses him to the level of general expectation. So Jesus teaches, as in the parable of the prodigal son, that when a man comes to himself he comes to God; and His redemptive mission, whether exercised on the body or on the soul, is a believing in man, seeing behind the worst

the buried capacities and touching them to life and dominance.

It would be a little difficult to carry this interpretation through our New Testament. There a very different idea is undoubtedly also to be found, which looks upon man as evil by his own choice, and sets forth a need of redemption which involves a radical change in his nature, a being born again. It will not do to say that this is a corruption by St. Paul of the simple Gospel of Jesus. In the Synoptics there is little at all about our being one with God, though there is the call to *become* sons of God, and to be perfect as He is perfect. It is to man's own creation that there are traced the moral evils that vex him, and the demand is made that we shall become as little children and begin life all over again. The hopefulness that Jesus has for penitent sinners has to be balanced by His very stern denunciations of those who seem to have been quite unconscious that they were living in sin. And the Fourth Gospel, which contains the strongest passages on unity with God, never refers to it as something which already exists, while it contains the darkest sayings about human nature as it is.

(b) The oneness with the Father claimed for Christ is made the truth about man in general.

The revolt against the Nicene Creed with its dogma of the Son being of one substance with

the Father is turned by claiming that this is really true about every man. Christ is God; certainly, for so are we. This may be a desperate device for getting some persons to reconsider their hostility to Christian creeds, but no one can claim that this is what the framers of the Nicene Creed really meant. This statement is made about Jesus Christ, and about no one else. What exactly it means, save a repudiation of any idea that Christ may not truly be called God, no one knows. The exact positive significance of the terms employed escapes us to-day.

Moreover, this facile interpretation of difficulties overlooks the fact that even about Christ, it is not only what He is by nature, but what He achieved as man that gave Him His unity with God. It is His character as revealed on earth that is the express image of the personality of God. Identity of nature is confessed in order to express the conviction that it was God's very self that was revealed in Christ. But if that meant depriving His earthly life of ethical attainment and moral victory it would be a pernicious idea. It was as man that the Divine Personality won for us the victory. If for revelation we need the Divine nature in Christ; for redemption we need a victory gained as Man in man.

CAN WE JUSTIFY THIS DESIRE ON SOUNDER
LINES ?

1. We shall do well to keep to the strong ethical sanity of the New Testament.

(a) It assumes, but places little value upon our natural sonship to God.

No one could safely deny that it is there; for the New Testament is based upon the Old, with its explicit declaration that man was made in the image of God and was constituted a living soul by God breathing into him. We need not even assume the idea that the Fall forfeited anything of this, for the New Testament makes very little of the notion of the Fall. But it is only in accordance with what our own conscience will tell us that this natural sonship, impaired by sin or left untouched, is quite insufficient for our redemption. No theory which denies the immediate facts disclosed to ethical sincerity is going to help us at all. And no redemption is going to meet our case which consists in merely informing us of our true nature and origin. If this could have sufficed, the New Testament would never have been written.

It is indeed important to hold fast to the fact that man's origin is divine; and paradoxical as it may seem, it is more hopeful to assume that the falling away from that origin is man's self-inflicted tragedy. If sin is charged to our

nature or to some necessity, deliverance is impossible. Sin is charged to will, and although the will may be weakened and the nature corrupted by sin, the fact that sin has a personal origin gives more hope for its complete overcoming than any other theory. But all through we must hold that there remains with man the light by which he judges himself to be darkness, and the Holy Spirit by which he knows himself sinful.

What the New Testament speaks of as our need is, in agreement with the Old, the re-integration of our personality, the creation of a clean heart, a new creation, which is not only going to wipe out sin, but is going to turn the potentiality of man's nature into something more than mere innocence and give to him a share in the Divine nature which shall be an active communion with God.

(b) For this remaking it reveals the perfect sonship of Christ.

The New Testament faith bases our kinship with the Divine, not on some theory as to our origin or speculation as to our nature, but on the fact of the Incarnation, in which the Divine nature is shown to be so kin to human nature that a perfect manhood is the result of their union. It rests therefore on accomplished fact, not on theory; the Divine is manifested in perfection and glory through a perfectly human nature. It is not in disclosing our original

nature, however divine, which is mere potentiality, but in the bringing of that nature into a perfect personal acceptance of the will of God that Christianity conceives redemption. If Christ's natural and eternal sonship could have served us, there had been no need for the Incarnation. There had to be worked out before our eyes that Sonship set forth in a life which fully partook of our own nature.

There is in every heart the Light that lighteth all, but that Light is ineffectual until it has been perfectly expressed in life. It remains unidentified as anything more than "light"; revealing, but unable to change what it reveals. The Light must be identified as Love before the heart lies open to its healing. No human personality could exist save in dependence upon the Spirit of God. If God wholly withdrew Himself from man, what would be left would not be man at all; but we are ignorant as to what it is we are dependent upon, and not responsive to the Spirit's pleading until the Spirit is set before us as our Lord.

It is not therefore a mere matter of names whether we refer to God or to Christ in us as the hope of glory. It means an altogether new thing when it is God revealed and identified in the Person of Christ who is known to be the inner Light and the indwelling Spirit of the heart. And this acts upon us in an ethically saving way, because Christ is God in terms of

our human life and human ethic ; so that it is no longer possible for us to remain content with mere potentiality, mere nature, even if divine, but only with the Divine as mastering this our life, expressing Itself in personality and personal relationships.

2. This partaking of the Divine nature is therefore at a higher stage and of a much greater effect.

(a) It saves us from mere introspection.

We may find the divine core of our selves by introversion, and there is great calm and refreshment in the process. We can retreat in an instant to that centre of absolute truth, reality, and purity. But it is always of the nature of a retreat, not only as escaping from the demands of external life, but also as forgetting the actual self with all its imperfections and faults and sins. The process does nothing to conquer human nature and make us like God as He is.

This type of religion, therefore, often simply carries the faults of selfishness on to a higher plane, making religion itself a means of blinding us to our own faults. We seem to be one thing in this innermost chamber of the soul, but quite another to those who have to look upon us and deal with us from without. And there is the danger of that worst of all delusions, of confusing God thus discovered with ourselves. We get by this purely inner means

only to the Divine nature, not to the Divine Personality.

The only healthy form of self-activity is the going forth of the self in love and adoration to another; the unwinding of our energies from self-concern altogether, and the recentering of them upon One who can be loved with all the abandonment of one's being. It is precisely this which Christ effects. He turns our vision outward and thus enriches the nature. The self is absorbed in the contemplation of Christ as the mind can be absorbed in the contemplation of some wonderful scene or some wonderful deed, not submerged back into its own ground by the depression of personality. By the inward way you come only to God's silence and His stillness, and although restful it is not fruitful. By the Christian way, which rests on the inward reality, you come to communion between persons, endlessly fruitful in its effects on the soul.

(b) It saves us from solitary religion.

Not alone or in solitary contemplation do we make our way to God, but in and through fellowship with man; for it is with God as man that we find the richest fellowship. You can therefore find your way to the very heart of God much quicker by discerning and serving Christ in your neighbours than by searching about in your interior life.

We become partakers in the Divine nature,

not in ourselves, but only as we become members of the Body of Christ, share the Divine through fellowship with others. It is this Body of Christ which is called "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." The same oneness which Christ has with the Father is promised us, but only as with others we are knit together in Christ. This higher mysticism soars beyond those dangers of indifference to the outward and to fellowship which certainly beset the lower type.

If we are enjoying the Christian experience we are therefore moving from nature, ground, potentiality to a personal communion with God, moving not backward and inward, but forward and outward, being knit together in a holy communion of souls, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost; so from what *is* to a ceaseless and inexhaustible *becoming*, a growing into the life of God by living intercourse and intimate communion. This is the way to a higher peace, the peace of an endlessly developing life in which all things are carried up into God, a knitting of ourselves to God which carries with it hope and effect for all mankind.

The Permanence of the Church

“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”—MATTHEW xvi. 18.

THE visitor to St. Peter's at Rome is directed to walk up the nave and keep his eyes fixed upon the dome, so that as it opens out he may gain some impression of its vast dimensions. But if his interests are ecclesiastical rather than architectural he will find his thoughts switched off by the text in enormous gold lettering which runs round the base of the dome: *Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam*. For as Michaelangelo's master-structure rests upon the great pillars beneath, so do Rome's claims rest upon this text. She claims to be the Church built upon this promise to St. Peter, whose bones are believed to rest under the high altar beneath.

Protestant opposition has attempted a variety of methods to undermine the Roman interpretation of these words of Jesus to Peter. It has even been claimed that they are an interpolation into the Gospel, as a comparison with

the Marcan text would seem to suggest. But no manuscript evidence for their omission is forthcoming. And when we translate the words back into Aramaic they seem perfectly natural, for the whole symbolism of the verse is Jewish. There is a Rabbinic legend that God said of Abraham, Lo I have discovered a rock to build and found the world upon.

When the genuineness of the words is admitted, it is then suggested that it was upon Peter's confession, not upon himself, that the Church was to be founded; and this seems to be supported by the difference in wording between: thou art *Petros* and on this *petra* I will build. But translate back into Aramaic and the word is the same in both cases: *Kepha*. To suggest that by "*this rock*" Christ refers to Himself makes the introduction of Peter's name pointless. That the Lord should build His Church on a *person* is true to the whole genius of Christianity, which everywhere makes personality its central principle; and we find elsewhere in the New Testament that the Apostles are regarded as the foundation of the Church. We are forced therefore to the conclusion that the Church is built on Peter. And we can admit this without being driven to admit that the claim of Rome is right; for there is a sense in which every Christian goes back to Peter, just as every human being goes back to Adam. Since faith in Christ is handed on from soul to soul, we all depend upon him who first confessed it. The emphasis is on the personal element as the foundation of all faith.

But it will be objected that our Lord's choice was singularly short-sighted, since Peter turned out to be anything but a rock. Almost immediately afterwards, Peter, perhaps presuming on this great promise, dares to dictate to his Master, and is met with the awful rebuke, Get thee behind me, Satan. His behaviour in denying his Lord at the trial, the compromise for which he was rebuked so strongly by the Apostle Paul, the tradition, so true to his character, that he attempted to escape from martyrdom in Rome and had to be sent back by a vision of Christ; all this shows him to be a thoroughly weak and vacillating person.

And yet the choice of this weak man may indicate the highest wisdom. A chain is never stronger than its weakest link; the founding of the Church must take account of the weakest elements. To build only on the strong is to court disaster. All down the ages the Church has had to depend upon weak and inconsistent men; not to have foreseen that would have been short-sighted indeed. So far back as Dante we meet the interesting idea that St. Peter is guardian of the gate because, having fallen so often himself, he is likely to be more lenient in his judgment.

But even weak as it will be, it is promised that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Church. This may refer to the demonic forces of evil which will be hurled against the Church, to the diabolical subtleties of temptation, or, perhaps most naturally, to the power of death, that inevitable decline which over-

takes all human institutions; against all attacks, all deceptions, and against internal decay the Church is promised protection. Whatever happens, the Church will persist.

**THIS SEEMS UTTERLY AT VARIANCE WITH THE
FACTS OF HISTORY.**

1. The Church has survived external attacks, but seems to have succumbed to internal decay.

(a) The Church was strong when it was fighting against overwhelming odds.

The infant Church entered upon an apparently hopeless conflict. Judaism was determined to stamp out the new sect. The crucifixion of Christ was followed by the persecution of the disciples, waxing ever fiercer as they increased; until the arch-persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, by an amazing conversion, passed over to the ranks of the persecuted. The direct attack having failed, it was then attempted to take the Church by craft, and it was proposed that Christianity should continue only as a sect of Judaism. And now it was the erstwhile persecutor who became the deliverer of the Church from a bondage that would have brought about its complete destruction, as the after-history of Judaistic Christianity proved. St. Paul's judgment was sure, and when Jerusalem fell, the Church was already well established in Antioch, Ephesus, Alexandria, and Rome.

Then there broke upon the Church a further baptism of blood in the frightful and long-continued persecution at the hands of the

Imperial Government. This was partly due to misunderstanding, partly to popular superstition, but also in no small measure to a fairly accurate apprehension that the Church was likely to become a serious rival to the State, and perhaps undermine its authority. And so the power that had at first been a protector against Jewish hatred and mob violence became the persecutor. The issue narrowed down to whether Christians would make an act of religious veneration to the Emperor as a divine being. It was an act that might have been regarded as meaningless, but it awakened a stubborn resistance, and for 250 years there was an intermittent struggle in which thousands of every rank and office perished by every conceivable form of shameful and torturing death. Behind the simple test there were great issues concealed: whether the State was to be allowed to dictate religion and to claim supremacy over conscience.

The third struggle had now to be faced, that with systems of thought that claimed equality with the Christian faith. At first these were in such forms as no one could have made terms with. For a century Mithraism was racing to the farthest confines of the Empire for supremacy, and then fell away completely exhausted by the reality and vitality of the newer faith. Then came the attempt to incorporate Christianity along with other religions and forms of worship; first in the clumsy schemes of Gnosticism and then in the more refined system of Neo-Platonism. The answer

was not only a determined claim that Christianity itself was the true syncretism, but Christianity just took whatever there was of value or truth in these artificial systems, and grafting the terminology in the one case, and the mysticism in the other, on to her own growing life, left them to wither away. More subtle was the attempt then made to decree that Christ was not absolute for revelation or the incarnation final. In that bitter internal struggle the masterful genius of Athanasius carried the Church to a position of challenging supremacy from which there could never be any withdrawal without accepting entire defeat. By the absoluteness of Christ for the interpretation of God and man, for history and the future, the Church stands or falls. "We are fighting for our all," Athanasius declared, and in that fight he led the Church to risk its all. After this it was Christ All or Nothing, and the Church supreme or nowhere. The gates of Hades as hostility or temptation seemed to have been thrust back for ever.

(b) But since then subtler attacks have had to be met, and apparently with less success.

The Church took over the Imperial ideal it had fought against with such courage and determination. The centralized, despotic, and coercive government that had been coupled with the name of Cæsar came now to be associated with the name of the Pope. The office of the Papacy has been more reminiscent of the Pontifex Maximus and the Cæsars than of the Apostle Peter. The power of excom-

munication and interdict came to be used for political purposes, and the power of the sword was called in to protect and advance the interests of the Papacy.

Christianity became the very type of syncretism that it had resisted. Pagan ideas of God crept back, and the revelation of Jesus was buried under a system which was as complicated as the old Gnosticism; Manichæan ideas returned and ruled out areas of human life as fundamentally unclean, magic rehabilitated itself in the theory of the sacraments, and the elevation of the saints into intercessors became in popular devotion indistinguishable from the old classical polytheism. Spiritual life so far declined that not only did unregenerate persons find a comfortable home in the Church but criminals found their way into the priesthood and some of the most dissolute and pernicious figures in history managed to get themselves hailed as the true successors of St. Peter. It looked as if the devil had managed to capture the Church for his own ends.

This degeneration led to the splitting up of the Church. First came the Eastern schism, due to the intolerant claims of the Roman see, and then the Protestant defection, due to the grave abuses and the superstitious degradation of doctrine. This last split is known as the Reformation, though it only reformed one branch of the Church backwards, and the other almost out of existence; for we are now presented with the one form of Christianity

which seems petrified and yet is slowly worn away, and the other, which by endless fission tends to the same sandy incoherence and dusty death. The Church seems to be incapable of moving, or if it does, only to fall to pieces. The promise against the inevitable advent of decline and death seems invalid.

2. The secular judgment on the situation is emphatic.

(a) There is no indication that the Church possesses a Divine Life.

It obviously does not possess the truth. In all the intellectual controversies the Church has been worsted and has had to come round to the position it once resisted. It is gradually losing all the intellectuals and has arrayed against it the awakening intelligence of the masses. The doctrines to which it has committed itself are absolutely incredible to the modern mind. The very term dogma has become a reproach; in ever-widening circles all dogmas are condemned without further examination, and if the Church teaches a certain doctrine, that is sufficient evidence that it is wrong.

The Church no longer manufactures saints. It matters not whether we measure sainthood by holiness or heroism, the old glorious days seem to be no more. We are told that Rome still possesses this capacity, but her saints no longer confront the world with irresistible appeal. It is said that hypocrites are plentiful in the Church. The endeavour to purge them out leaves us only with persons who are not offensive because they are not anything, who

never sin grossly because they are incapable of anything big. Christianity seems to produce a conscience which is only alive to petty and superficial issues, and is entirely blind to the fundamental causes of sin and the graver crimes of injustice, cruelty, and oppression.

The Church is not immune from the creeping paralysis that sooner or later overcomes all human institutions. Here, as elsewhere, "the idea creates the institution, and then the institution kills the idea." The Church has brought forth and then slaughtered her own children, and barrenness has overtaken her at last. It is said that corporations have no souls, and the Church seems no exception. Where the government of the Church is autocratic, you can expect nothing more than from a board of directors, a conscience only alive to their own interests; and where the government is democratic, the rule of the average mind and the pace of the slowest member operates. No Church as such can ever work itself up to action on any living issue, and its very resolutions, which it looks to others to carry out, are not worth the trouble.

(b) And now the war has apparently finished the Church.

In every country the Church has simply backed the national cause. That appears natural and right enough to us, but we judge quite differently about the German and Austrian Churches, and we know what they think of our Churches. But even if our cause

is right, there is no conscience on the part of our Churches that the way is wrong; indeed, there is a clamour of asseveration that because it is necessary it is right; whereas elsewhere it is beginning to be recognized that, right or wrong, it is futile.

And whatever is right about this business, the sanctioning of war has had effects beyond all dispute. The Church only repeats the least thoughtful secular opinion. There is nothing distinctive said; there is obviously no more power of judgment than in Parliament or Press. If any one is saying anything at all clearly to-day, if any one has a glimmer of light, you may be sure that he is some one right outside the Christian Church and probably an atheist. And the Church is caught out by the secular powers with the greatest ease. She is asked to provide her sanction, and she does so by saying that this is unfortunately the only way that we can bring in the Kingdom of God; and then the secular power, armed with this sanction, pursues the war for—well, not for the Kingdom of God.

At this hour of human history, in this awful agony, the Church remains silent. It is more than likely that Europe is at the end of her hegemony, that civilization is threatened; but the Church has nothing to say. She does not call the people to prayer for deliverance, because she dare not. It might be misinterpreted at home and by our enemies. And so we gamble for starvation and with a million

lives at stake. And the Church can say nothing but tell us there is nothing else to do.

YET I BELIEVE THE PROMISE REMAINS TRUE.

1. And that not merely of the mystical Church.

(a) It remains true of the institution.

The idea of the mystical Church is a very valuable one. The mystical Church consists of all souls in communion with and under obedience to Christ, and their number is neither coincident with nor confined to the organized Churches. But the mystical Church is not the Church Christ meant to found. He had in view a society, and of a much more visible nature than the Church as we know it to-day; for it was evidently meant to be a society that confronted the world with a completely different organization of life. And following out the general principle of Christianity, which is that of the Incarnation, we are bound to look for the mystical Church to be bodied forth in actuality. If that is a movement which must inevitably result in decline and corruption, then Christianity stands convicted of being impossible, and useless for the redemption of the world.

The New Testament means always the actual Church: the Church at Corinth, the Church at Thessalonica. And it was these actual Churches that Paul had in mind when he spoke of the Church as the Bride and Body of Christ.

With our present ecclesiastical controversies and divisions we can only define the Church as the totality of associations which acknowledge their sole bond of union and life to be Christ Himself.

The expectation that the institution shall one day complete its work for the world and then shall fade away into the general human society can be shown to be baseless. Despite the tendency of the Church to cover less and less of the ground of human life, and to become merely an association for worship, the war will probably wake us up at last to see that the State, on to which the Church has been shouldering more and more of her responsibility and proper concerns, is likely to prove the destruction of society. The latent ideas of Christianity, when diffused throughout the general body, do not operate, but simply cease to have definiteness and power. The virtual Christianity, which at present the Church is trying to show is sufficient, is only capable of urging men to destroy one another. The true hope of the future is that the State shall disappear within the Church. The war has shown the danger and bankruptcy of the State, and only of the Church in so far as it has been willing to follow the State.

(b) For the organization has served a Divine purpose.

Every responsible historian will recognize the enormous service of the Church to Europe. It was she who handed on to the barbarians

the finest culture of the past. Even now the Church is the best introduction to what of the past still lives. It was the Church that kept alive some idea of unity in Europe after the dissolution of the Empire—an idea of unity to which Europe must now return or see all further progress barred. It was the Church that pressed on men all through the dark ages the idea that there was such a thing as a moral appeal and spiritual considerations. It was the Church that was the actual parent of the ideals and the institutions that are sometimes offered to us as sufficient substitutes, however slow she has been to recognize her own offspring. The State itself, Education, Trades Unions, Democracy, Feminism—every one of these owes its very existence to the Church.

The Church has remained faithful to her original confession. Despite all betrayals, inconsistencies, blindness, and unfaithfulness, the Church has never apostatized from Christ. She may have misunderstood and misinterpreted Him, but she would die yet rather than surrender her faith in Him. She will not take down the cross, or abolish the Bible, or give up Christ. And this strange obstinacy is true of the most formal and corrupt Churches. Rome is not only rigid in her adherence to the primary doctrines, but she defends them with even unnecessary outworks. Her claims, so offensive to Protestants, nevertheless make a stand for the supremacy of the Church over the State, on which all liberty really depends,

as we can now see. Her ritual keeps alive the most tremendous ideas. And we can never be sure that all this may not at some moment break into life and receive a new interpretation that will sweep mankind back to her fold.

And all the Churches witness to the most fundamental need of humanity, namely fellowship in worship. From the Mass to the Quaker silence, from the Anglican ritual to the P.S.A., there is this in common, that only together can man truly seek God and realize the presence of Christ. Despite class distinctions and class alienation, the Church is still the widest meeting-place for common mankind. The Church is even at this hour the broadest, the most international and universal thing in existence.

2. Are we going to carry this latent promise to fulfilment?

(a) What appears to be the end may be only the beginning.

The Church has been dying so often, and lo! it comes to life again. The Papacy, the Crusades, the Great Schism, the Reformation, ought to have destroyed the Church, but they have not, and for her the darkest hour has always been just before the dawn. There seemed no hope for the Church when Francis rose to build her again on the affections of the poor. The most barren rationalism seemed to have sucked all the life out of Christianity when Wesley turned the eighteenth-century vice of enthusiasm into a virtue. "Nothing can now save the Church of England," was said just before the Oxford Movement. The Church

carries the capacity for new life and endless revival within herself.

The war may bring just the purging and fusion that is needed. There are questionings among the rank and file that do not get recorded at this time. There is less register of the deepest opinion in our religious papers and religious leaders than ever. It is beginning to be seen that there is need for a clearer distinction between the Church and the world, for a closer following of Christ, for an international Church. And the very depths of the Church's fall and the misdirection of all the leaders may bring her to penitence before Christ and openness to the leading of the Holy Ghost.

This may come, however, only through great tribulation. The world will come to despise the Church more than ever, our numbers may be depleted, our finances brought very low, the highest officials of the Church lose all social prestige. But this will not matter. If we get back to five barley loaves and a few small fishes; if the Pope is counted no more than St. Peter when he was put to death; if we are reduced to twelve men and a few women; nay, if there is left only one weak believer, Christ will still be able to say of him, On this rock will I build My Church.

(b) There seem to lie before us diverging prospects.

We may see what Benson foresaw in his "Lord of the World": the Catholic Church standing by its unchangeable position, opposed to all reforms. And on the other hand a great

humanitarian religion gathering all the reformers, pacifists, and socialists to itself: and actually bringing about a truly socialized society, world government, and perpetual peace: then the final conflict and the end of the world.

Or we may see a new movement towards a freer type of Catholicism, uniting the oppositions of the Church in a glorious whole; for Christianity is essentially the religion of reconciliation. We may see a new interpretation of Catholic worship and faith and order, free at last from every taint of worldliness, coercion, and magic, the Church meeting every need of man and wide enough to mother the whole of humanity, giving Christ freely to all and gathering all the nations within her ample bosom; the true City of God, coming down out of heaven to earth.

Sins of the Tongue

“I said, I will take heed unto my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.”—Ps. xxxix. 1.

THE Hebrews seem to have been unusually conscious of the sins of speech, and to have developed a strange sensitiveness to the dangers of an unbridled tongue. The Book of Psalms is alive with vivid images of what harm a man can do with his mouth. It likens the human tongue to that of a serpent, that restless forked organ which is mistaken by the ignorant for the sting itself, so sinister does it seem; but there is worse concealed: “the poison of asps is under their lips.” Even the unnatural garrulity of some people, the suspicion that their fascinating speech arouses, does not tell you the venom they are capable of injecting into their words. Again, the tongue is likened to a whetted sword, capable of inflicting hideous wounds, and this capacity is said to be found alongside the use of smooth and oily words. Suddenly the suave manner is dropped and you are confronted by speech that is meant

to slay. Or, truer still to common experience: "they have aimed their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret places at the perfect." Behind some anonymity the silent bow is drawn and a man's character falls by an unseen hand. There is a simile for the action of the tongue that may be passed over without notice, for it is an effect of speech that is not so familiar: "like a sharp razor that worketh deceitfully." This describes a curious experience you may have had. You visit some house and your reception is everything that can be desired: the conversation is friendly and full of interest, but when you leave and you walk home alone, you find you are smarting with pain; yet it takes the closest examination before you can see the deep clean cut, as if you had been handling a razor with an edge so fine that it could cut without your feeling it at once.

In the Epistle of St. James we have a passage that seems sheer exaggeration, so awful are the evils it traces to the tongue. Least of all our members, yet it is as powerful as the rudder of a ship: the smallest pressure and the whole course of things is changed. It is like a spark of fire that some traveller in the forest has left unextinguished, which nevertheless soon has hundreds of acres aflame until a noble forest is utterly destroyed. The writer says that while man can subdue every variety of wild beast, the tongue will defy him. And then he traces the devastating fire the tongue can

kindle to the fact that it is set on fire of hell. One is apt to be so shocked at this, that one does not notice that it is surely a wonderful revelation; the fires of hell are of that same quality which the tongue can kindle. And what can it not? The vast conflagration which ~~is~~ ^{ed} ~~now~~ raging across Europe was kindled by irrepressible and untamed tongues; it was blown into flame by whispered suspicion and the breath of intrigue; it has been fanned to destructive force by taunting and brutal speech. Hell is like that, according to St. James: one endless strife of tongues; blotting out the light of heaven with the smoke of suspicion, creating a suffocating atmosphere sulphurous with enmity and bitterness, keeping the flames for ever roaring with ungovernable hate.

One wonders if the Hebrew mind was especially given to this sort of malignancy; whether centuries of repression turned them to forge their tongues into swords and light their lips with flame; whether the poison of captivity settled in their speech, so that they became addicted to the sword-play of wounding words and adepts at verbal arson. There seems no reason to suppose that this is the case. It is simply a human failing which the priestly Hebrew mind extracts from us all in that great confessional the Bible; it is the characteristic stain of social intercourse which it seeks by a vicarious penitence to cleanse away from the world.

HOW IS IT THAT THE TONGUE IS SUCH AN
OCCASION FOR OFFENCE?

1. Half the plagues of humanity are traceable to this tiny member.

(a) If we could stop the sins of word, the sins of thought and act would be enormously diminished.

It is no ethical formalism which led the Hebrew to suppose that if he could set a watch on the door of his lips half the battle would be won; that one of the cures for sin was silence; which moved St. James to declare that "if any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also." It is of course perfectly true that so far as a man's own soul is concerned the sin of thought stains as much as if it issued in word or act. But sins of thought are sometimes difficult to fight by thought alone, and if one is resolutely determined that they shall never find utterance in speech, one has gone far to dry up the spring at its source. There is something curious about the thoughts that visit us; they do not all arise from our own minds. Unclean thoughts float down on the mind like smuts in a smoky air. Awful suggestions have sometimes presented themselves to us, as if from some diabolical source. And the first thing to do is to close any channel of expression. If fire breaks out in the mind, shut all the doors and so prevent draught.

Jesus is searching enough in His condemna-

tion of sins that are confined to thought and imagination, yet He teaches us emphatically that it is that which cometh out of a man that defileth him, and He makes what seems a most trifling expression of annoyance a matter for heavy judgment. The passage in which this teaching occurs is apparently confused and the words difficult to translate into their full equivalent, but by rearranging the passage in the light of its context it would seem to read: "Whosoever shall say 'Raca' is liable to the judgment of the courts; but I say unto you, whosoever shall say 'Moreh' is liable to the fires of Gehenna." This must stand for a feeling of contempt, and in giving expression to it we go further than a sin of thought, and cause pain and harm to some one else.

A profound meaning underlies the apparently very extreme declaration that we must give an account at the Judgment of every idle word. An idle word does not mean an evil or harmful word. Neither does it mean that every word we say must be purposeful or edifying. But it does mean that the light and unconsidered word reveals far more of what is in a man's heart than his circumspect and guarded speech. Those careless expletives and common characterizations which we so often use, and which are supposed to be meaningless or not to be taken seriously, may yet reveal the real state of the mind; disclose the stagnant reservoirs of bitterness and indicate a deep contempt. If we cared to examine our

speech, and attempted to check it, we should discover the alarming state of our minds and set about changing it. Our most innocent conversations show a disposition to make light of truth on occasion; our most permissible profanities show a fundamental irreverence for God and man; and surely our shocking national adjective "bloody" will have to disappear, since war has made it a true descriptive. Or were we all along as bloody-minded as our speech betrayed?

(b) What pain and harm the tongue can cause.

Words can penetrate to the heart like the piercings of a sword. Our speech is often deliberately intended to wound, to find the vulnerable spot, to draw blood, and that it does not always wound, because of the hardness of our enemy's armour, is nothing to our credit. Let us not exaggerate: there is no need to. There is no comparison between the suffering we can cause with our tongue and that we can inflict with a sword, as the presentation of any one with such a choice of suffering would soon show. But one wonders whether the instinct to wound with a word does not finally account for all the murders and wars that deluge the earth with blood. When one sees how this war has been wrought to fury by the pulpit and the press, one begins to discern that the hate which expresses itself in words must one day find expression in acts. If the cruel intent to

wound fails of its immediate purpose, it is storing up a force which will never be content until it has found full expression.

There is the poisoning of reputation in what we call gossip. Gather together any company of men or women, and I believe the sex makes little difference, and almost immediately there is proposed for discussion the conduct or character of some person, which is then discredited, often on the most inadequate knowledge or evidence. Human beings are the most interesting subjects of conversation, and there is no reason why it should be unfair or malicious to discuss them. But we all know how soon it is. Some people are full of whispered scandals and never seem so happy as when they have hold of some story of sin or evil. And with some, the intent to injure is as criminal as if we stilettoed a man in the dark.

But even when there is much less malice, we often find ourselves led by simple carelessness of speech to say that which hurts or undermines. One can cultivate habits of brilliant characterization, seek after a smart and coruscating style of conversation, which flings about sparks and acids with little care for their effect on the feelings of others. An acute sense of humour can pass insensibly into story-telling, which, in itself innocent enough, yet may corrupt or coarsen the tempted or immature mind. Even a certain boisterousness and hilarity, refreshing and right

enough as it may be, may dance on, forgetful that some people have corns and are easily pained. Let your words minister to men everything that is healthy and delightful, but remember that if this is your aim and not simply to work off ebullition of spirit or to relieve your feelings, then you must consider the needs, the susceptibilities, yes, even the prejudices, of those you desire to serve.

Why should the tongue lend itself so easily to evil?

The instrument itself cannot be blamed.

The wonderful physical organ we call the tongue, one mass of nimble muscle and sensitive nerve, is of course nothing but the obedient servant of the mind. We talk of a person having a long tongue, a nippy tongue, but we are only using the name of the organ for certain proclivities of mind. Yet those areas of mind do seem to betray us beyond our intention. "I let my tongue run away with me" we say, as if our speech got beyond control. "I did not mean what I said" is an excuse which will serve for a sufficient apology. Our tongue is like a tap with the washer worn away, more difficult to turn off than on, inclined to run to waste, let out something we had meant to keep to ourselves.

This dangerous apparent defect is due to the marvellous organization of the brain. If that organ is to be any use to us it must provide a vast network of associations by which the slightest resemblances of idea, or

sound, or mere contiguity in time of registration are connected, and the whole must work with a mobility beside which lightning only creeps. Let interest or excitement be strong and these associations will come rushing together and pour themselves into speech, and there will be no time to guide the movement or check the worth or propriety of the associations proffered. Let a man be primed by drink and you can get almost any secret out of him. Let the presidency of reason be withdrawn, and a man of most upright life will utter most awful blasphemies and terrifying indecencies. And we sometimes get near this condition when we give too much rein to our talk. Disraeli's famous description of Mr. Gladstone as "intoxicated with the exuberance of his own verbosity" is psychologically quite a conceivable condition.

Everything we have ever heard or thought or done or seen is registered in the wonderful filing system of the brain, and the law of association provides us with the means of finding anything that we want and recalling it to memory. There are, however, thousands of things we want only to forget, but these may be recalled by chance association in a general excitement. For while the brain registers according to our attention and our interest, other things by their very force, or even the disgust they rouse, will imprint themselves very deeply. Over all this material the mind exercises a discriminating choice, and

must ever do so in the higher interests of purity and sanity. A corrupt mind will make associations between far-distant and disconnected areas, which a pure mind will discourage and allow to fall into disuse.

2 (b) Therefore one must set a watch upon the door of one's lips.

This is especially necessary to one who desires to attain any degree of holiness. There must be a resolute turning back of any word that would cause another pain. According to J. H. Newman, that is the distinctive mark of a gentleman, leave alone of a Christian, and we must deny ourselves even innocent and legitimate expression if that means causing others to stumble. The gain in sensitiveness to the purer and nobler forms of speech will be well worth while the immediate loss in spontaneity, brightness, and interest. One can waste strength in brilliant conversation which might have been turned to higher purposes.

There ought to be about every religious person something equivalent to the much-abused doctrine of reservation. In talking about religion, especially if it is one's calling, the tongue is tempted to express more than one has experienced, with a desire to appear initiate and advanced in the spiritual life. It is a more laudable desire to be interesting in order to attract people to religion. But this mistaken policy often ends with merely interesting people in oneself and in one's ideas. The word mystic is derived from a word "to shut," and one of the

interpretations of mysticism is that it shuts the mouth about ineffable experiences. This interpretation needs to be remembered, for many people ambitious to be thought mystics end up with being only religious pretenders.

Above all there should be about every Christian something of the priestly idea of the seal of the confessional. You may never be called to hear a confession, though the worldling is often tempted to unburden to a friendly religious soul; but do everything to avoid the responsibility, for very few of us are capable of really keeping a secret. But when the tale of scandal reaches your ears, let it stop there; let its snowball career come to an end with you, or you may find yourself cultivating a taste for evil which will corrupt the mind, and an itch to repeat the sordid story which will soon carry you beyond the bounds of truth and kindness.)

WHAT IS THE PREVENTION FOR THE TONGUE'S BETRAYAL?

1. The negative method is the imposition of silence.

(a) Compulsory silence drives deep into the soul.

The mere abstinence from an abuse of the gift of speech will not, of course, eradicate evil imagination and malicious motives from the soul. Some persons have gained a reputation for wisdom and strength solely by a habit of silence, which really indicated nothing more

than poverty of spirit and sterility of mind. But the imposition of silence, or the interposition of a period between thought and speech, often helps to draw one's attention to the malignant forces and unrestrained thoughts that swarm within the soul. Silence sometimes has an overwhelming effect on an aggressor, but it is even more salutary for the one who is tempted to reply.

There are some ugly things in the mind that would soon wither away if they were never allowed expression. It is almost impossible to keep up hate unless the tongue is allowed to utter what the mind feels. Unclean imagination could not be pursued unless its workings were facilitated by being given expression. The uncleanness of the world is increased by the habit of speaking and scribbling obscene words and telling unpleasant stories. It is a question of supply and demand. There will be no supply by the mind if the tongue does not demand it.

The background of all great speech is silence. There is a preaching which is nothing more than thinking aloud what should be thought in silence. Many have thought themselves impelled to preach who were simply moved to relieve their feelings; and some notable persons have secured a temporary recognition as prophetic voices who were only desirous of giving the public a piece of their minds. But about true preaching there is an element of reserve, an atmosphere of awe, a suggestion of some-

thing beyond about which the human voice must keep silent.

(b) Silence therefore should be deliberately practised.

You need to be silent before God. If our times of converse with God are as chattering as our conversation with men, they are not likely to do us much good. Whatever be the form of our prayers, they should always be preceded by silence, in order both to realize the presence of God and give a chance for the deeps of the soul to come to the surface. But there is a use for long periods of silence, a waiting on God, listening for Him to speak to us. For it takes long training in the use of silence to detect the speech of God, so rare and wonderful is it. But this silence is also effective for our particular purpose in curbing the tongue.

There is no need to make ourselves rude and oppressive in the presence of others when conversation is the order of the hour and we are expected to speak. But if we find ourselves habitually carried beyond our intention when we are with others, we must simply refuse the impulse to join in, until we are more sure of ourselves. And as a rule this can be done without parading a chilly reserve. All that most people want is a good listener, and one can learn a lot by listening. Anything is better than the miserable feeling which Thomas à Kempis is blamed for mentioning, which is nevertheless a veritable experience: "I never mix with my fellows, but I come back a smaller

man"; though perhaps he ought to have pointed out that this was due as much to oneself as to others.

There is therefore a real need for meeting with others for silent worship, and for keeping silence by agreement at other times. The retreat habit is being recovered, and it is one of the signs that the age is feeling its way back to religion. The failure to recognize that this is one of the chief purposes of public worship is hiding from us a great source of strength. We come together either to hear or to do something, and there is therefore no understanding of the Quaker Silence, or the guided silence of a great liturgy. If we were silent together before God there would be less sin of speech when we spoke freely to one another.

2. But the positive method is the filling of the Spirit.

(a) The symbol of the Spirit's baptism is the tongue of fire.

The tongue is not only a member to be kept in with bit and bridle, capable of being saved only by being silenced. The negative method can never be wholly successful, or secure that the sources of speech are being cleansed. The tongue was given us to be employed in speech, and it is only when God opens our lips and our mouths show forth His praise that the tongue finds its true use and final redemption.

Human speech reaches its greatest glory when made the instrument of the Spirit of God.

It is the prophetic utterance that reaches the supreme grandeur of which human speech is capable. The great organ notes of Isaiah make a music which will never die away. It is in prayer that sometimes the ignorant and uncultured will rise to great purity and poetry of speech. But it is when prayer reaches its highest stage and passes into praise that we begin to understand what human speech was created for. It finds its perfect employment in thanksgiving to God. So Enoch tells us, "the angels rest not day nor night, for to them is thanksgiving rest."

And there is nothing which will purge out the poison from the human tongue like its dedication to the Word of God, nothing that can quench the fire lit by hell save the fire lit by the Spirit. All the vast machinery of the mind that goes to make up speech is fully employed when the brain is stimulated; and there are two forms: the base and unnatural one of intoxication, and the glorious and natural one of inspiration.

(b) But if prophecy is not to be ours, there is another effect of the baptism of the Spirit on the tongue.

The Spirit of God has for His highest name, the Paraclete, the Comforter; and the Spirit-guided tongue makes itself a minister of comfort. Not repression alone will eradicate the habit of wounding and lacerating speech, but the deliberate intention of comforting those who need it. It sets out not only to be kind but to

make your words *sound* kind, to be full of healing and soothing power. There is no greater ministry, there is no nobler life. Dr. Parker said late in life that if he had his days over again he would direct his ministry chiefly to healing the broken in heart. It would secure a wide and permanent audience. And do not think such a ministry is beyond your powers. Nothing seems so empty as words when one is attempting consolation, but when self is forgotten and sympathy is real they succeed in spite of every appearance of failure and sense of their futility. Make your tongue an instrument which you yield to God for His divine service.

And there is plenty of opportunity just now. In the dreadful tragedy of our times, when words are used to hound on and inflame, our impotence to stem the tide of hate and destruction tempts us to the perilous path of sarcasm and bitterness. That is a temptation, and if yielded to it poisons one's whole nature. These are days for a new prophet, and any voice which is crying in the wilderness is hailed as if sent of God. But we ought to remember another test, His message: "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned."

Christ, the Ruler of the Spirit Realm

“I have the keys of death and Hades.”—REV. i: 18.

THE radiant and awful vision with which the Apocalypse opens is of profound psychical and theological importance. When the writer says that he was “in the spirit,” this does not mean merely that he was in a spiritual frame of mind, but that he was in a peculiar psychic condition which to-day we should call a trance: the physical senses being closed to the outer world and made the medium of a revelation from the world of spirit. That raises the question as to how far revelation of this type is to be trusted. It would be dismissed by some as mere hallucination, while by others it would be taken as an accurate description of the spiritual world. Two considerations incline us to take a middle view. The vision is pregnant with a moral significance usually absent from hallucination, and awakens more than a merely psychical interest. On the other hand, it is obvious that the details of

the vision can hardly be reconciled with any visual possibility, and that they have been borrowed from existing literary sources. The only explanation that seems to embrace all the facts is that which accepts this as a true vision of overwhelming splendour and glory, of which no description is possible save as translated into physical terminology.

Its theological importance is found in the high Christology of the writer. The glorious figure of the vision is identified with Jesus Christ, but reference to Daniel's vision will show that his description of the ancient of days is here transferred to "one like unto a son of man," and the words here placed upon the lips of Christ are elsewhere ascribed to "the Lord God, the Almighty." Throughout the Apocalypse the Lamb is simply put side by side with God, and is made the only representation of Deity. There is a Trinitarian background to all the visions, but when it comes to what is even spiritually visible, everything is embodied in the symbol of the Lamb that was slain. The meaning would seem to be that Christ is the incarnation of the eternal sacrificial element in God, and that this element constitutes the whole essence of Godhead in its revelative aspect. Heaven knows nothing, and wants to know nothing, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

But it is perhaps the closing words of the vision that hold the strongest interest for us to-day. They are more than a poetic rendering

of the fact of the resurrection. The resurrection never means for the New Testament simply that Christ has survived death or merely a confirmation of immortality. Whatever was the physical or spiritual basis of the resurrection, it conveyed to the first disciples that Christ had conquered death and had become Lord of the life beyond.

WHAT DOES THE KINGSHIP OF HADES SIGNIFY?

1. The conception of Hades has had an instructive evolution.

(a) It translates the Hebrew term Sheol.

Sheol is sometimes used poetically for the grave, but generally it stands for a definite locality, a vast underworld cavern in which the spirits of the dead dragged out a shadowy and cheerless existence; a realm which lay beyond the jurisdiction of Jehovah, where moral distinctions were unknown and religion came to an end. "In death there is no remembrance of Thee: in Sheol who shall give Thee thanks?" The contemplation of such an existence was naturally abhorrent to the pious soul; hence the frequent cry in the Psalms for deliverance from Sheol. Advanced Old Testament scholarship has generally concluded that such passages only utter a longing to escape from immediate death; but it seems necessary to read into them something more—a cry for deliverance from Sheol itself, and therefore a

witness to the craving for a higher conception of immortality.

In between the Old Testament and the New, the idea of Hades underwent considerable modification. In general we may sum up the contribution of the inter-canonical writings by saying that Hades has now become an intermediate abode in which moral transformation is possible. Some writings regard Hades as the permanent abode of those who do not yield to moral progress, while others regard it as providing a foretaste of happiness or torment to be experienced in the final destiny of Paradise or Gehenna. It is, however, only in Alexandrian Judaism that a man's destiny is considered to be fixed at death. Palestinian Judaism held to the idea of moral probation extending beyond this life.

That the conception of Hades had undergone this transformation, as well as that the general ideas of the other world were still in a fluid condition, must be borne in mind when we come to inquire the meaning of the New Testament terms. The dominant interest of the New Testament in a salvation which could be realized in great fullness in the immediate present prevented any systematic development of the prevailing eschatological notions. Thus we find the term Hades used without fixed determination: sometimes as equivalent to death, as in the woe pronounced on Capernaum, and sometimes as interchangeable with Gehenna, as in the parable of the rich man; where we might

have expected, from the description, to find that he was in Gehenna, whereas it is said that he is in Hades. So eminent an authority on matters eschatological as Canon Charles says that there is distinct evidence in the New Testament of moral probation beyond the grave, and he is persuaded that Gehenna is in Christ's teaching a place only of spiritual punishment; declarations that ought to be borne in mind whenever we interpret our Lord's picture of the other world.

(b) The mediæval conception moved towards a fixed scheme, but not without contributing some valuable suggestions.

It fastened upon the strange hints in First Peter that Christ preached to the spirits in prison, and adopted the elaboration of this idea found in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus. This late work holds that the preaching of Christ was effectual, and in a splendid and dramatic story narrates how Christ stormed and invaded hell, released the saints of the old covenant, and translated them to Paradise. The "Harrowing of Hell" was a favourite subject for mediæval mystery plays, but the moral significance of the idea that the dead were evangelized does not seem to have been realized by Church doctrine.

Interest centred rather upon the task of mapping out the other world into the threefold division suggested by the Apocrypha of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, and in laying down what conditions determined the distribution of

spirits into these realms. Purgatory, as the destiny of the vast majority, claimed the greatest attention, and there moral change was conceived to be wrought by redemptive suffering; while Paradise was looked upon as a condition beyond relapse, and Hell as a condition beyond repentance. The abuses which sprang up when the ecclesiastical authorities were constituted the sole guardians of Purgatory brought about the Protestant reaction, which unfortunately had the effect of leaving the doctrine of the other world depleted of all idea of moral probation and making it even more inadequate to spiritual issues: either an unchangeable heaven and hell, or, where an intermediate state was retained, conceived only as a place of rest hardly distinguishable from the primitive Sheol.

Modern thought has now revolted entirely against the idea of a hell as a place of irredeemable depravity, and, less strongly, against heaven as a place of unchangeable holiness, and seems inclined to make Purgatory sufficient for all cases, greatly ameliorating its sufferings, until, indeed, they are pictured as little more than the pleasant exercise necessary for climbing the heavenly hill, while in some quarters there seems to be growing up the idea that the ascent is made by means of a mechanical lift. Whether the modern notion has quite taken into account the moral issues may be doubted, and the prevailing idea that evil can be abandoned and truth learned with-

out any danger of pain is not borne out in our present consciousness. But what is needed before we can advance to a saner doctrine is a new appreciation of the attitude our text recommends.

2. It vests all jurisdiction over the other world in Christ.

(a) He is conceived as having made that realm His own by right of conquest.

The New Testament cannot get beyond its astonishment that the Son of God should die, and it can find no adequate language to express its conviction that His consenting to that experience has made some difference to death. What that difference is may not yet appear, but it is confident that death has received a wound from which it cannot recover.

There are three ways in which it seems permissible to interpret this conviction. The resurrection of Christ provided not only overwhelming evidence that life continued beyond the grave, but that life which had been lived for spiritual ends suffered no deprivation by the experience of death, but entered upon a condition of existence in which the spirit was completely master. It meant also that the shadowed experience which separates this world from that could be entered upon in the confidence that Christ had gone before us, was President of its realm and would shepherd us through the dark valley. This belief has certainly operated in millions of cases to rob the experience of death of all fear and transform it

into something more of the nature of a glorious triumph. But beyond all this it hangs above our horizon the promise of a dawning day which shall never again know the night of death.

But in making Christ Lord of Hades as well as of death, it claims that there is no experience in the other world which Christ does not overrule, and no condition which is beyond His access. We may think of Christ holding the keys, as if He were the Porter of whatever place of punishment there may be. It would be something to know that it was His hand which admitted the soul to its destiny, whatever it was. But it is even more comforting to think that the keys mean it is open for Him to visit any lonely or suffering soul. We feel that the hint of First Peter can be pressed further: surely He who sought out those on earth men designated "lost" will not be less solicitous of those who in the other world may be suffering the effects of their sin.

(b) The principle of the saying is that a personality rather than a process rules the other world.

We are really told very little about the other world in the New Testament, and what we are told is capable of varied interpretation. This is disappointing to those who crave a greater certainty. But the New Testament can afford to be reticent, since it reveals that Christ is Lord of whatever worlds there be, even of those which lie under shadow or in gloom.

The modern tendency is to prefer a process to a personality; for personality had come to stand for something so arbitrary that even when it was applied to God it still retained that character. But here we have to do with a Personality that we have actually known, and it is one that can be absolutely trusted. No process conceivable can be adequate to the variations and mobility of the human soul. It does not matter if you moralize law; the strict working of moral law seems to hold little but doom for the majority of us, for if the effect of every fall is a further fall, nothing stands between the first slip backward and the bottomless abyss. Make your law quite spiritual, and say that by some automatic discrimination every man goes to his own place, that in the other world it is nothing but a man's own self which determines his condition; and yet how much is left hopeless still! It is not the apportioning of justice that is the concern of the New Testament, but the bringing of salvation, for well it understands that the only wages of sin is death. What does operate there is a Personality who knows our life from within, and who, by the infinite adaptation of a love that is willing to suffer for us, can adjust Himself to every conceivable situation into which sin can bring a man.

We must be careful that this principle of personality is not degraded into something equivalent again to mere process. We must remember that the personality of Christ was

capable of great hostility to sin and could use painful means to tear down the disguises of hypocrisy and the veils of self-deceit. Even the beautiful idea enshrined in the "Dream of Gerontius," that it is the face of the Incarnate God that causes us purgatorial pains and determines our punishment, is not sufficient. We must add to this the shepherding concern which belongs to the Jesus of the Gospels, the infinite patience which sought to teach men the meaning of the things they suffered and awaken them to what they were losing.

IS THIS SUFFICIENT FOR OUR MODERN NEEDS?

1. The present craving for further light would seem to indicate that it is not.

(a) Spiritualism is endeavouring to tear down the veil with its own hands.

There ought to be no inhibition of psychical research which is undertaken in a truly scientific spirit, that is, both without prejudice and credulity. If we can find out the secrets of the spirit world, it looks as if God intended that we should. Serious and sustained inquiry is then not only a right but a duty. The fact that some of us do not feel interest in or need for such inquiry cannot determine the matter for those who crave some further indication that their beloved are alive and that all is well with them. The fear that something may be disclosed that will upset ecclesiastical tradition is unworthy, most of all in those who

believe that the ecclesiastical tradition embodies truth that nothing can shake.

But these experiments need to be made with great caution, and only undertaken under a sense of responsibility. The trickery and fraud with which investigation has been surrounded must be taken into account and every effort made to discourage and prevent it. The fact that the evidence which up to the present has been produced seems to many capable of an interpretation that does not demand the interposition of spirit-activity must be remembered. If there is a fractional residuum of the evidence that cannot be explained by the hypothesis of telepathy, it must be considered that it is so minute and often so trivial that it can hardly be made the basis for any elaborate superstructure. It must be remembered that the atmosphere of the ordinary séance is not altogether favourable for testing realities or weighing evidence. The rigid condemnation that spiritualism is a traffic with unclean spirits is too like fear and superstition; but the fact that the whole investigation does seem to be fraught with serious mental and moral dangers, especially in its effect on the medium, needs to be carefully considered.

Least of all should spiritualism be elevated into a substitute for religion. It is a minor calamity for superficial people that the one word "spiritual" should have to do duty both for an attitude of soul and a description of non-material existence. To identify belief in the

communication of departed spirits with spirituality, while to condemn as a sign of crass materialism the judgment that the evidence is insufficient, is simply confusing the issues. And one fears for the new-found faith of those who have been convinced on this evidence, if at any time a different interpretation should be found to be sufficient; for disappointment will then be acute, and the last state of the materialist converted by spiritualism may be worse than the first.

(b) Especially do we need to be doubtful about the dogmas for which spiritualism is claiming authority.

It is maintained that we already have evidence to show that the view of the other world as pictured by ecclesiastical doctrine is entirely untrue; spiritualism shows that there is nothing corresponding to judgment, suffering, or damnation. Every one with whom we can get into contact is happy; people remain pretty much the same, and life continues there along the same line as it has been lived here. To the judgment of some this would *be* damnation. But it has to be remembered that we are here absolutely at the mercy of mediums for our evidence, and it takes little study to reveal that there is growing up among them a certain set of fixed ideas and an esoteric jargon which may be due to quite other cause than the unity of revelation.

The central dogma of a progress beyond the grave, which is apparently both painless and

inevitable, is certainly to be received with caution. It is too much like a reflection of that view of human progress which prevailed before the war revealed the real destiny of much of our modern civilization and culture. We cannot assume that the introduction into a realm of clear light and pure truth would be altogether pleasant and comfortable for some of us. And even if we feel confident about ourselves, we all know those of whom it would only be charity to hope that they will yet have to learn what they have compelled others to suffer, if ever they are to be saved at all.

From some elements of the ecclesiastical picture of the other world we should welcome complete release: its mechanical nature, its inadequate and irrelevant tests, its hopeless fixity and unmeaning cruelty. The new doctrines are the nemesis of the carelessness of much Church teaching; but it will be morally disastrous if the old doctrines are simply rejected in favour of the new.

2. The Christian attitude still stands forth immensely superior to its rivals.

(a) Even as that is embodied in ecclesiastical doctrine.

If that only be taken as symbolical and thoroughly spiritualized, as from its very nature it demands, it is incomparably grander than anything that is set up against it to-day. It gives us a threefold division which corresponds closely with the moral possibilities. It sets before us the need of some preparation to make

us ready for the company of the blessed and to fit us to bear the light of God. It postulates an attainment of blessedness from which no relapse is conceivable; and it holds out the fearful possibility of a degradation which carries us beyond the possibility of repentance. That possibility must remain if moral conditions are to rule; but if we cannot make it dogmatically impossible, there is no need to assume an endless and awful torture. Indeed, the revelation that there is suffering beyond contains elements of hope: for if that suffering is spiritual it is a sign of life, and therefore holds the possibility of something better. The symbol of fire surely implies destruction of evil and the purification of the good, and, according to the later tradition, it is this same element of fire that constitutes punishment, purging, or joyous light, according to the condition of the soul. What determines a man's position is the sight of God and the effect this has upon his soul; and if there is torture at all, it is torture in the presence of the Lamb—torture which is caused by being compelled to realize rejected love; surely a saving pain, however sore.

It may well be that a doctrine so vague, which has been gathered from such varied sources and has had such a fortuitous evolution, will not appeal to those who demand an authoritative and completed revelation or an accurate scientific knowledge of the conditions of the other life. But it ought to be remembered that Christian doctrine consists

of the universal and primitive instincts of man, the prophetic insight of spiritual geniuses, and the systematic thought of intellects alive to the issues involved. If we only recognize that our thinking has still to be carried on, and the whole scheme as evolved by man's moral consciousness set in the clear light of God's love and redemptive purpose, we possess something in the Christian doctrine of the future life which does correspond to God's method of revelation through moral evolution.

At least this doctrine is free from certain disadvantages that cling to spiritualistic conceptions. It refuses to reduce moral growth to a mechanical process. While it holds out the hope that in God's universe "lost" has only a relative meaning, it refuses to turn a hope into a dogma; and if this leaves the other world subject to tragedy, it leaves no room for the trivial and ridiculous. It surrounds the subject with a reverence which may not be invaded by vulgar curiosity or exploited by charlatans. And it demands for an understanding of the laws of the other life a spiritual judgment, and so binds up revelation with religion. The secrets that God holds in His hand may only be learned by knowing God Himself.

(b) But when trust in Christ is absolute, we are content with the revelation that all things are in His hands.

The idea that our destiny beyond this life depends upon our attitude to Christ has been

preached in a way utterly contrary to all ethical and religious interests; but the real principle is quite valid and sufficient. If we can discern the spiritual supremacy of Christ, we possess a talisman that will conduct us safely through whatever worlds there may be. If we have stood before the cross of Christ until self has been crucified and the vain world has crumbled into dust, then we shall be able to abide the dissolution of death and stand before the great white throne. There is a wealth of truth in the old hymn still:—

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Mid flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

The real merit of this attitude is that it throws us back for all our hopes not upon any scheme, moral or evangelical, but upon a Person; not upon ourselves and our deserts, but upon Christ and His mercy. Remembering His hatred of hypocrisy and His determination to expose all self-deception, this forbids any carelessness or presumption, but it enables us to leave ourselves, whatever our faith or attainments, together with all others, to His mercy and judgment. This is more than enough.

The New Catholicism

“But now they are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. . . . There should be no schism in the body; but the members should have the same care one for another.”—1 CORINTHIANS xii. 20, 21, 25.

WHETHER they are inside or outside the Church, almost every one who cares in the least for religion is tired of sectarianism. But it is to be feared that “tired” represents only too adequately the depth of the feeling. The hostility to sectarianism does not spring from any profound realization that our Lord meant His Church to be one, that the New Testament insists upon that unity with every variety of argument and illustration, and that the effect of a divided Church is the presentation of a divided Christ to the world, with all the hindering of conviction and dangers of partial understanding that entails; it is simply “tired” of the confusion, the wrangling, and the inefficiency that sectarianism breeds; and it is generally far too tired to give the thought and prayer to put things right. It is frequently other people’s sectarianism we resent; we are often not even aware of our own.

When the word catholicism is proposed as the only way of fulfilling our Lord’s prayer and realizing the New Testament ideal, this only serves to rouse in many minds the greatest

fear and hostility. It is inquired whether we mean the word taken in its broad literary, or in its narrow ecclesiastical sense; and if we reply *both*, then we are immediately suspected of being either frivolous or insincere. If any approximation to Anglo- or Roman-Catholicism is suggested, then that can have only one end: the fastening again upon us of a yoke from which our fathers broke themselves free. Yet in spite of these fears and prejudices that word is gaining ground and is already sounding sweet and homelike to many ears. There is an intense craving for the One Holy Catholic Church, and no lesser vision and ideal is holding the hearts of the younger generation; and when Catholicism is adopted by them as a watchword, it deliberately means both what is conveyed by the narrower ecclesiastical term and what is meant by our more modern connotation. Catholicism to us means something that *includes* Roman Catholicism, *and much more*. But it is this proposed inclusion that frightens people. Just as after the war there are some people who want a League of Nations which shall exclude Germany, and virtually be a League against Germany, so there are some who are quite anxious for a Catholicism which shall exclude and be in opposition to Rome. A United Free Church of England; one British Church; a World Evangelical Alliance; this is the very limit of some people's vision. But just as Lord Buckmaster has had the bravery to declare that the League of Nations that does not include Germany will be not only a failure, but a perpetual danger, so we have the temerity to hold that a Catholic Church which excludes

Rome will be unworthy of the name, and only be a standing menace to Christendom.

WHAT IS THE RELATION OF THE NEW CATHOLICISM TO THE OLD?

1. It desires to reappropriate everything of spiritual value in the historic Catholic system.

(a) We feel the attraction of its mystic worship.—To many people Catholic worship seems a mere emphasis on outward form; it degenerates into ceremonial; it is sometimes indistinguishable from mummary; and its effect they imagine must be to repress the demand for spiritual understanding, and to foster the dangerous delusion that the performance of a rite is an adequate worship of God. We do not for a moment assert that there are no real dangers, or that there are not elements in Catholic worship which have been allowed to grow rank and fruitless for want of vigorous pruning. But Catholic worship does recognize that man is both body and soul, that the soul can be reached through the senses, and the soul must express itself through the body. The idea that these are somehow antagonistic to one another not only blames the Creator for uniting them, but makes the Incarnation either unthinkable or a mere condescension to a weak human need. It is only their perfect reconciliation that will inspire us to redeem the body from unchastity and grossness, and rescue the material world from ugliness and exploitation. It is no accident that art has reached its highest attainment through Catholic worship. Its sanction

of the christianization of economics is only just beginning to dawn upon us. Catholicism has held these things together even when it did not understand why.

That worship does set forth what is central and vital to any Christian worship: the Presence of Christ. Whatever be thought of the means taken to do this and of the doctrines which have been promulgated to secure faith in that Presence, it cannot be denied that it has done full justice to what were almost Christ's last words: "This is My body," which others have tried to explain away; and that, however much it has made the miracle of the altar dependent upon the word of the priest, when that condition has been satisfied it does leave access to the Crucified an open privilege for all who seek Him. You have only to make that sacrament the supreme expression of a universal principle, and the priestly office the representative and authoritative act of the Church as a whole, and the way is open for a return to something that the whole of revelation is designed to serve.

It is true that the Catholic type of worship emphasizes pageantry and richness and surrounds everything with the mystery of the supernatural. But when once faith in all that Christianity means has risen beyond hope to positive joy, it demands pageantry, and richness need no more conflict with simplicity in worship than it does in nature. It is much simpler to let our worship be directed by symbolic acts than always and only by verbal directions; the rite is wider than dogma, and leaves that margin of the inexpressible that dogma so often destroys

itself in trying to compass. And we are none of us so afraid of the supernatural to-day that we want our worship only to express the brutal baldness of naturalism. The worst enemy of Catholicism could not say that it had been a bad school of mysticism; it has been its most prolific soil.

(b) We can even admire some elements in its rigid order.—The continuity of the Roman Church is doubtless explained on a very mechanical principle—that of mere succession conferred by the laying on of hands confined to a certain order. But if the explanation seems to us inadequate, it is a symbol of the sense of continuity, and this is something we part with only to our most serious loss. We suffer enormously in Protestantism, and especially in our Nonconformist Churches, for lack of history. It is not that we are without our saints and martyrs; we honour and revere them. But our martyrs belong to a time of controversy, and often the remembrance of our saints only serves to keep alive bitterness and prejudice; and we manage to forget that there were generally martyrs on both sides. But to have no inheritance with the martyrs of the Empire, or with saints like Augustine or Bernard, Francis or Catherine, is an intolerable deprivation; and it is impossible to have any part with them unless we can summon up some sympathy with the system that bred them and in which they rejoiced. It is something to feel behind one that unbroken army and to know that one is keeping alive the faith they fought for.

The rigidity of Roman doctrine is a point of great soreness with most moderns, and the way

in which it has been promulgated, the suppression of intellectual freedom which went to its construction and its defence, seem to us utterly unworthy of faith. And yet we are growing suspicious of the extreme reaction into which advanced Protestantism has gone. We are hearing everywhere to-day the demand for more definiteness, for a faith that is committed to something for which one can fight. The Christian faith is either fundamentally right or fundamentally wrong, and the world has got to make up its mind which. Here Rome has stood firm when others have wavered, and even those who do not agree with her attitude must grant it the merit of both consistency and bravery. To every world challenge and to all proposed change, she has replied with "No surrender." She has behaved as if she held a truth on which the hope of man depended, when the rest have often behaved as if it really did not matter. And on many a point it is clear that we are moving back to something for which Rome has always striven.

Perhaps the widest appreciation of Catholicism has come about through the revival of mysticism. To an outsider the devotional system of Rome looks childish and wooden, but the truth is that nowhere have the laws of the spiritual life been studied as they have by Catholics, and if they have rigid laws, these only concern the lower stages and prescribe general outlines, which all who have experimented for themselves will testify to be invariably sound guides. The idea that the heights of the devotional life can ever be reached without some knowledge of its laws and its penalties

has only led to some losing themselves in the mists or being dashed down to the abyss just when they were near the summit. And the whole idea of the monastic life, from which, because of certain errors and abuses, we have recoiled with such a vengeance, at least witnesses to this: that the perfect life is not to be lived without discipline, without austerity, and on some different basis of fellowship than that which prevails in the world.

2. But can these things be regained without entangling ourselves with other features and surrendering those principles which we believe to be equally divine?

(a) Is not any approximation, or even admiration, fraught with danger?—We have to deal first of all with the frequent cry that one is going over to Rome if one appropriates anything Roman. This rarely amounts, fortunately, to a charge of dishonesty. It is generally nothing more than a friendly fear as to where all this may lead. Now, let us say at once that Rome is not so regarded by us that we should think it a spiritual calamity to cross to its community; no more so than if we were to become a Wesleyan. We have placed no barriers on what we may finally do. We are in God's hands, and we care not where He leads us. We dare to quote the lines—

“I do not ask to see
The distant scene: one step enough for me,”

even when remembering where their author himself ended. But we should regard crossing to Rome as an ecclesiastical blunder, a dis-

service to Catholicism. We desire to make it unnecessary; though if we are not allowed to have those things Rome holds for which we crave, we shall be forced to choose between food and freedom, and, however hard it be to find them separated, when they are, the choice is inevitable.

But can we have Catholic worship, faith, and devotion and not find ourselves compelled to admit physical views of the sacrament, priesthood, and the papacy? I do not quite know what is meant by a physical view of the sacrament. It does not seem to me that transubstantiation is necessary for Christ to make the bread and wine His Body and Blood, that is, to use these as a means of coming as near to us as He wants. Must we go on to have an authorized priesthood, episcopally ordained, and finally one supreme head? I think we need bishops, and we have them already, in a sort of unauthorized and slipshod way, in our College Principals and Denominational Secretaries, and I cannot see why a united Christendom should be prohibited having a head, any more than a local Church or a denomination. But there would be an immense difference if all these could be explained differently. No one denies that the whole Church is a priestly body, so I do not see how you can deny the name to those whom the Church sets apart for the supreme office of leading its sacrificial worship. Wherever a congregation of Christian people selects one of its number for that purpose, you have a valid priesthood because it is representative. I see no reason why such a priesthood should not seek

recognition by the other churches, and if Bishops were chosen to represent the Church as a whole and as expressing its continuous life, they would be the simplest medium of recognition. This does not deny the priesthood of all believers, but actually represents it in an orderly way, instead of leaving it unrepresented and practically denied amongst us.

But can we have all these things and get on without the coercion which seems to be inseparable from Catholic practice? I believe we can. I would have all the sacraments available, but not compulsory. I would not make membership of the Church, least of all salvation, dependent upon either baptism or communion, nor would I make a valid sacrament dependent upon episcopal orders. I believe what makes the sacrament valid is Christ, and not regulations. But I should crave leave to show that sacraments *were* necessary to the complete salvation of the whole people, and authority and order to the whole Church. Would not this leave everything confusion? For a time it perhaps would, but the moment it was no longer necessary for any one who wanted sacraments to leave his own denomination, I believe that they would soon establish themselves on the demand of all mature Christians. And, in the same way, I believe that doctrinal declarations reached by the will of the whole Church would make their way all the quicker, when it was left to the Spirit to teach others their need of them.

(b) We are seeking a Catholicism wide enough to include the things Nonconformity has stood for.—First among these is the freedom of pro-

phesying and praying. The Church is a living body, and its faith is a growing appreciation of a living God and Saviour. No Church can keep pace with the Spirit of God who is to lead us into all truth if no one is allowed to speak what he feels. We do not mean that every new thing is to be taken as true, or even that a gifted intellect or saintly preacher may not be guilty of grave error. But error is better combated in freedom and love than in repression and hate. We have seen in our Nonconformity a phenomenon like the New Theology, a statement of faith to which no one, not even its chief exponent, now clings, which, on the whole, rather had the effect of leading people back to a higher orthodoxy, and, to the astonishment of some, has deepened the catholic tendency in our Free Churches.

We want to conserve all that variety of experience and the freedom for cultivating it that has caused our denominational splits. I believe that there is not one of them which ever need have occurred. In the Roman Church new movements have been continually provided for. It is Protestantism that has seemed more impatient and blind. I must confess that I have great sympathy with the Baptists in desiring to make baptism a more meaningful ordinance. I want to retain for ever the fire and holiness of Methodism. There is no reason why Quakers should go out of the Church to get either silence or spontaneity, as the "Fellowship of Silence" in the Church of England is now proving. But it is only as you have these things within the same body that they are corrected from extravagance, that they really minister to the Church as a whole, and give us the many members in

the one body, no one asserting either its sole necessity or its unconcern for the others.

Especially do we stand for the faith that this new Catholicism can only come by the baptism of the Holy Ghost and definite human response. Of themselves, machinery and proposals for union cannot accomplish anything more than multiply size and bind together things perhaps already dead, with no real advantage gained. But when that baptism does come, it will provide only the fire and force, not the channel or form. The two things are not opposed. There is one *body* and one Spirit. If Christians did care more for Christ they would care more for one another; if they did worship Him with more joy they would find a richer expression; if they did understand their own faith better, they would band themselves as one army to spread it through the world. But the new Catholicism is not merely a settling of past differences; it has a vision for future days.

WHAT IS THERE IN THIS CATHOLICISM WHICH IS REALLY NEW?

1. It is prepared to solve the great problems that now face humanity.

(a) It has some light to throw on the social confusion of our times.—Every one knows that after this war there is going to be another, and one which may be even more disastrous: a great class war which may much sooner bring the whole fabric of civilization to the ground, a war which will almost certainly do nothing but put us back to a more barbarous time. If we had a Church

which knew that it was set to meet every need of man, and which had already gathered to itself every class in loyalty to Christ as our only King, it would be easy through fellowship and through mutual sacrifice not only to prevent that war, but to bring about a settlement which the waging of the class war will never effect. I do not mean anything so sentimental as merely being nice to the poor, getting workmen and dukes to hob-nob, or even persuading employers to secure better wages and more humane conditions of labour, and workmen to give up the right to strike. What I mean is that the Church could actually reconstruct society by leading the people back to the cultivation of the land on a co-operative and communistic basis; the great reconciling aim not justice or dividing up profits, but religion as the chief end of life, all need to be freely supplied by a common share in essential labour. None but those united in religious faith could dare and carry through such a venture; and nothing less radical is going to restore religion.

(b) It has some light to throw on the international situation that the war will leave on our hands.—Whatever aberrations the Church has suffered from during the war, the time will come when she will recognize that her charter knows nothing of Greek and Jew, bond or free, male or female; and that whatever bitterness remains she has a Gospel which has power for all. It does not matter whether people have become savages by degradation or because they have never advanced beyond the animal stage; the Gospel of Christ is sufficient. No one who believes in Christ will venture to

suggest that Christ did not die for Germans or that God does not love them. It will be for some of our theologians to attempt the task of their conversion as boldly as they have counselled their destruction.

But every one knows that there is another situation ripening beyond the confines of Europe. The East is awakening and is learning our methods. We cannot coolly imagine that Africa is for ever going to be content to be at the mercy of exploiters and concessionaires. Europe will find itself facing another peril, and the white man a combination of the peoples he has so long spurned and oppressed. If we are not going to see a great war between the hemispheres, between white and coloured, we must see to it that the whole world is brought under the dominion of Christ. The missionary enterprise is the one thing on which the future peace of the world depends. And for this we want a new Catholicism, not simply the blind condemnation of everything pagan, but the appropriation of the light that shines in other faiths and the interpretation of that light in Him who is the Light of the world. Missions are more than ever necessary, but they need a more catholic outlook and temper.

We want an internationalism which can breed a loyalty to which people will remain true beyond their own national loyalties. Mr. Wells suggests that we shall need for that an end of all our kings and the crowning of the Invisible God King of all. It is probable that we shall have to contemplate what Mr. Wells at present ignores—the determination never

again to touch war. Those who have taken that stand on Christian principles to-day have been browbeaten, scorned, and thrust into prison. But does any one imagine that scorn and imprisonment is going to end the conscientious objection to fighting? It is going to be tremendously increased by the soldiers themselves, if only the next war comes quickly enough. And if it does not, it will by then have become the principle and the tactics of International Socialism. And if you wait long enough you will have an International Church all over the world which will not allow its members to take up arms against one another.

2. But we are heartened to all this by recollecting that this is really no new task.

(a) The Church has achieved considerable success along these lines before.—When we ask that the Church shall recognize that it has something to do with economics, we have not only the example in the Book of Acts still waiting for a closer following, we have the Monastic system, which all unconsciously showed social possibilities which have never been realized because of its unnatural segregation of the sexes, and we have the mediæval Parish system, in which everything centred in the Church and was inspired by religion: not only worship, but work, wages, recreation, amusements; and we were much nearer to happiness and beauty along certain lines than we have ever been since. The experiments of the past justify greater experiments in the future.

The Church was once able to stand over

against a tyrannous Empire which knew no god beyond itself, and, without arms, but only with capacity to suffer, to oppose to it the claims of another Empire and another King, and eventually to win a complete victory. If Christian people would get above their nationalism and their reliance on the State, they could put something much better in its place. The blood of the martyrs has not yet found its full justification; it still cries from the ground, "No King but Christ; no sword but the Cross."

And when we ask for one Church wide enough to hold humanity in its bosom, we simply ask that the word "catholic" shall be realized—that Church which is universal and everywhere; and here the conquests, whether of Catholics or Protestants, already prove that there is no race they cannot reach and no need of man to which Christ is not more than the answer.

(b) This then is the New Catholicism.—At present it is no more than a dream in the hearts of a few, rather misty and vague perhaps, yet able to make every waking hour full of unrest for its realization. With others it is only a dumb craving for they know not what, a discontent with things as they are. It has yet to outline its policy and fight its battles; and before it can conquer, there are prejudices to overcome, fears to dispel, false conclusions to disprove. Yet it holds the field. Denominationalism can no longer count upon the old-time loyalties. Neither Protestantism nor Romanism can ever do anything but stand over against one another, hostile

and suspicious. There can be no reconciliation until they are gathered into one really Catholic Church.

There stands over against us the intransigence of Rome, and it seems quixotic to hope that Rome will ever make it possible for those who have found true things in Protestantism, and still more in Nonconformity, to come into free and friendly union with her. But there is the equally fatal intransigence of Nonconformity with its really unchristian suspicion of outward things, its equal inability to see that it holds only half the truth, and not the whole. Who knows what change of temper there would be if it could actually be shown that Catholicism without compulsion was possible, fidelity to the fundamentals without bigotry, order without rigidity? Even Rome could not remain the same if there was growing up around her a Church which possessed everything she claimed, but held it in humility, in tenderness, and in freedom.

Such hopes can only be realized as we get back to the catholicity of Christ's character and teaching, and to a new interpretation of the really revolutionary significance of the orthodox Catholic Faith in the matter of His Person and Work. It is following names instead of Christ that has ruined us all. It is the attempt to employ worldly power instead of the wisdom of the Cross. It is false scholarship that has given us a divided Christ. Only as we rediscover the One Catholic Christ shall we be able to build the One Catholic Church.

The Trinity and the Social Revolution

“That they may be one, even as we are one.”—
JOHN xvii. 22.

AMONG socialists and revolutionaries it is generally assumed that Christianity is one of the main bulwarks of things as they are. Christianity is patronized by the official classes and its propagation supported by the wealthy, because it is believed to contribute to contentment; and its most enthusiastic adherents belong to the middle class, which is always opposed to any radical change in society. If this connection is ever challenged, it is generally on the ground that orthodox Christianity represents a perversion of the original teaching of Jesus, which was much more in line with working-class aspirations. Despite creeds and pictures, it is still remembered that Jesus was poor and was a craftsman, that He had humanitarian sympathies and was disliked by the rich and ruling classes, and at their instigation put to death. The attempt has been made to appro-

priate Jesus as a leader of the common people, and to show that His doctrines were socialistic; but it is usually thought necessary to distinguish this Jesus from the Christ worshipped by the Churches and embodied in the creeds. Here again the evidence seems all on the side of the popular impression. The more orthodox the believer, the more conventional he is in all his judgments. If he stands by the creeds, he also stands for the accepted basis of society and desires social distinctions to be preserved; if he is a "catholic," he is generally a Tory and thinks socialism the most dangerous of heresies; if he is a sacramentarian, he is probably reactionary on every possible subject. To the orthodox evangelical the whole social problem is a problem of the thriftless, drunken, and criminal, and the glory of the Gospel is that it changes these people and makes them into respectable citizens, content with their position and respectful to their betters. It is only when you get to Nonconformity, a stage removed from ecclesiastical and sacramentarian Christianity, that you find a stalwart liberalism, which believes in an alleviation of the conditions of the poor by paternal government. Less concern for creeds seems to go with more concern for progress, and the rejection of authority seems to make for a more democratic spirit. But even here there is a disposition to cry halt when certain stages of enfranchisement have been reached. Meanwhile the younger generation of workers begin to talk about economic emancipation, to be disappointed with a political democracy that leaves the power of wealth still sovereign. If Christianity sur-

vives among these revolutionary classes, it is in a still more diluted form. The elevation of Jesus to Godhead is looked upon as taking Him out of the ranks of humanity and investing Him with the regalities of autocratic kingship. The doctrine of Atonement through the Cross is felt to sanction the idea that suffering ought to be submitted to; which is responsible for the long enslavement of the working classes. The doctrine of the Incarnation seems to put forward an unreal condescension; while the doctrine of the Trinity looks like one of those mysteries by which priesthoods keep inquiring minds from their sacred preserves.

If it is replied: The higher your Churchmanship the less reverence you can have for the State; the higher one's doctrine of the sacraments the more one is troubled about the present economic basis of society; the more absolute you make the Deity of Jesus the greater the revolution to which one is committed; and as a sample of the type of society proposed the Athanasian Creed should be taken as the sanction and pattern; then one is suspected of playing with paradoxes or of attempting to confuse the issues in the minds of all plain men.

Yet I want to show, quite soberly and sincerely, that the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity is the ultimate sanction and only perfect pattern of human society and in matters sociological the one article of faith that matters. This is the Catholic Faith, which unless society keep whole and undefiled it shall without doubt perish everlastingly.

THE TRINITY EMBODIES THE PARADOX ALL
SOCIETY MUST OBSERVE.

1. We shall assume that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is true.

(a) By that we mean that it is true in every way the human intellect can test.

It is true to faith. It is everywhere implied in the New Testament, and without the fully developed theory, faith wavers between idolatry and polytheism.

It is true to philosophy. The apparent paradox of the Trinity is one that is familiar to every student of philosophy, who knows that, in all systems, sooner or later there emerges the ultimate problem of the One and the Many. It is the temptation in every philosophy to reduce either the One or the Many to something illusory, in order to solve its problem. It causes something approaching amusement to the ordinary man to read the Athanasian Creed with its continual reiteration that though the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, yet there are not three Gods but one God; but a philosophy which ignored this apparent contradiction would, if put into practice, destroy either human personality or human society.

It is true absolutely. That is to say, it is not a truth relative to human conceptions, which we can get beyond by thinking more divinely; that while to human analysis there are Three, to Divine knowledge there is only One. It is a truth of divine revelation; the Divine revealing

what It is in Itself. It is not an accommodation to human frailty, not a merely temporary Trinity for the purpose of achieving human redemption. The doctrine may pass the possibility of what pure intellect can understand in its central and essential statement that the Three are One and the One is Three; but what appears to be a contradiction to intellect is solved by higher methods: by faith, hope, and love.

(b) But we must be quite clear what the orthodox doctrine is.

We must beware of the easy solutions which only evade difficulties by leaving out half the declaration. There is the Sabellian explanation that the three "persons" are only three aspects of the One God. This is supported by the fact that "persons" translates the much less distinctive *prosōpa* of the Greek. But words are not to be decided by their derivation. We must obviously keep to such distinction of personality as is demanded by Christ's earthly relationship to the Father. There is the emanation explanation, which regards the Unity as being saved by thinking of each successive Person as less divine; which is a lapse into something worse than polytheism—the confusion of semi-deities. There is the idea that the Persons are real, but only emerge from the undifferentiated background of Godhead for purposes of revelation or redemption; to be reabsorbed again when this is accomplished.

We must equally beware of the alleged popular impression, which, despite the reiterated denials of the Athanasian Creed, thinks there are three Gods, or thinks of the three Persons

in such a way as to imply that there are three Gods. Nothing more need be said about that danger. It is so repulsive to the modern mind that we are not likely to fall into it. But it is nevertheless sometimes implicit both in theological constructions and in popular devotions. Whenever the functions and attributes of the Deity are divided among the Persons in such a way as to make them absolutely uninterchangeable we are getting in danger of Tritheism. The danger appears to-day whenever it is pleaded that Mercy is the attribute of the Son, but Justice the attribute of the Father; in the apologetic plea that the revelation in the Son does not reveal the whole nature of God. We must remember that difference in personality is declared to be compatible with sharing absolutely the same Nature, so that what each is the whole is. Neither are we to think that it is by adding up the Three that you get the Godhead, that each is a part of God and something more than each the whole.

Perhaps there is even some danger lurking in the apparently harmless suggestion that the resolution of the contradiction of Three and One is to be found by saying that, while in one sense God is Three, in another sense He is One; if this means that the threeness is in a higher sense one, or that the oneness is in a higher sense three. Neither term is relative, but absolute; *Three and One*. Three in One, One in Three; there must be no attempt to soften the contradiction by emphasizing one side against the other.

But surely, it will be said, such an absolute

contradiction cannot be true; the truth can never be so subtle and difficult as this.

2. It is when you come to the social application that its truth is discovered.

(a) Our great social problem is precisely the same.

It is how to get a real unity composed of personalities. This is not a mere philosophical problem which interests only thinkers; it is the great problem of human society, the problem on which all reforms and idealism are being continually wrecked, the most practical, pressing, and apparently insoluble of all problems that have ever confronted man. If it is complained that the difficulties of Trinitarian doctrine are a theological invention, one has the right to ask whether the difficulties of social life are an invention of sociology. If it is said that the mind can never rest in a paradox like the Trinity as final, it can be replied that it is only in keeping the two sides of the paradox equal and entire that we shall ever find social stability.

The one problem of human society which we are always trying to avoid is that of personality. We could get on splendidly with our paper schemes, but they break down on the fundamental factor of personality: that being-for-oneself, the individual soul, not only with rights, but with such power of asserting them that it can break up all unities whatever. We often say our difficulties are simply due to human nature. We shall not stop war or eliminate competition or establish a better social order until we change human nature.

But the difficulty is not the human nature which we all share, but the insurgence of personality.

There is a great dread of some forms of socialism because it is feared that they spell the "servile State," the State everything and the individual nothing; all life ruled according to one type, regimented, drilled, with no conscience, no freedom, and no will. We have had a taste of it in Prussianism, and another taste of it in our efforts to defeat it, and they are blind who think that it is going to be continued. It will break, and break disastrously, on the fact of personality, which will not consent simply to merge itself in a greater whole.

On the other hand, the claim of individuality to stand alone, to think of itself as an end with no concern for others, who are also ends, is an equally false extreme. Personality must find a social unity. For personality, as a matter of fact, owes itself to social unity. It is only by close contact with others that we develop personality at all; it is only by intimate union with others that personality reaches its greatest height. The personal is not the contradiction of the social: they are correlatives. You cannot have a great society which is not composed of great personalities; you cannot have great personalities except as a product of intense social life. Whatever the difficulties of adjustment, these difficulties are not the result of incompatibles, but of false conceptions of personality and of false conceptions of society.

(b) Now, that the Divine is a Perfect Social Unity is our hope and guarantee.

No one can work long at any social reform without sometimes being tempted to regard the whole thing as hopeless. The intractability of persons, the tremendous economic strife which underlies all social troubles; their apparent insolubility, because it is such a task to produce sufficient for human needs, while so many people want to live a lazy life, or only do the easiest jobs; these fundamental facts seem again and again to defeat all our dreams. Every man, under all his politeness, is only fighting for his own.

It is something, in the face of such facts, to fall back upon the thought of God. How can any one imagine that the great work of regenerating human society can be carried on without the fact of God and faith in Him? If human life has simply evolved out of the physical order; if the human mind proceeds from that which has no mind; if human society has developed simply through material pressure, then the sooner we realize that existence is one huge tragedy and any hope of improving it vain, the sooner we shall cease to waste our time and strength.

But of more help than the bare thought of God is the further thought of the Holy Trinity. We ought to rejoice in the thought that the Father the Creator, and the Son the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit who creates fellowship are One. If the physical world, the redemptive purpose, and the instinct for society come from three different centres, then human reconciliation is hopeless. Still more may we turn to the orthodox definition of the Trinity as Three

Persons in one God with great hope. For the purposes of its social application we must not reduce the significance of the word "person." It must not mean less in God than it does in man; for, if it does, then our problem has never been solved in the Godhead. We are faced with an absolutely new problem, and with no hope of its solution. But in the doctrine of Three Persons each in Himself God, and yet only One God, we have the guarantee that we can solve the social problem without destroying personal distinctions.

THE DOCTRINE SHOWS WHAT THE BASIS OF UNITY MUST BE.

1. It must be sought on the basis of the sacredness of personality.

(a) Now, that is where all our troubles come from: they deny it.

The general effect of our present economic system is that it denies the rights of personalities. Men are treated as means, as instruments of production, as ways of making wealth, therefore as machines. Right down underneath all symptoms this is the real cause of our social discontent. It will not do to propose that we should make the machine run easier, that we must see that it is better oiled, and then it will turn out better and more products. It is the idea that man is a machine for making things that corrupts everything, and breeds that bitter resentment that eventually flares up in revolution. We must make a radical change in our very idea of industry or

we shall have a revolution. I need not tell you how near we are to it to-day, that there is behind it the bitterness that will wreck its own hopes, but which will certainly destroy almost everything for which we care. No arguments, no increase of wages, and no re-adjustment of machinery, least of all no coercion, will prevent its coming. The flame has broken out on the Continent; it will leap the narrow seas that make us an island.

Somehow that basis must be changed. It may not be our province to declare what that economic basis must be, but we can say that no basis will be satisfactory that does not recognize personalities as the end for which industry exists. If we are to work harder, it is that we shall provide for a better type of life in which personality can grow more freely. That entails, as I understand it, a complete change in the present situation, in which it is within the power of any person or set of persons to say whether a man shall work or not, and at what he shall work, and for what remuneration. There is nothing that ought to give a man the power to determine another's life in such essentials.

It is the same problem that is going to cause trouble to this business of waging war, for whatever ends. The sense of the sacredness of personality will one day make this method as obsolete as duelling. The great trouble is that, at present, it looks as if, unless we destroy some persons, they will destroy other persons. But this arises ultimately from the general delusion that every one naturally wants to

destroy every one else. More and more there will be bred the man who will say, "I am not going to destroy any person until I have clear evidence that he himself is out to destroy," and behind that the still more revolutionary opinion, "Whatever happens, I will not destroy." This attitude will be found to go increasingly with the demand for the emancipation of personality from the slavery of industrialism. It is only servile States that can make and carry on war; it is best done when capital and economic issues are the real causes. We are confronted with two great revolutions in thought coming down upon us with irresistible force: the unwillingness to kill, and the determination not to be enslaved. They are not academic discussions, but have in them the potency of leading mankind out of this impasse or into a worse.

(b) But the basis upon which unity alone can come is still ignored.

The Unity of the Blessed Trinity is due first to the fact that They all share the same nature. The unity of mankind must come from the same recognition. We all share the same nature, which was made in the image of the Divine. That means, not that human nature cannot fall, but that it can be restored; so we dare not deny humanity to backward races, to savages, or to our enemies. It is this inability to recognize that we are dealing with human beings, even in war-time, that is our danger. Because we hear only one side we think our enemies less than human, and that leads us to abandon all psychological diplomacy, and to say and do things which, if we only recog-

nized they were human, we should know would be the most fatal hindrance to our ever gaining our ends. This is a war of spiritual issues, but you cannot fight such a war with material weapons; we are fatally blind to the necessity of spiritual means for the winning of the war.

We forget that what constitutes the Unity of the Trinity is Love—a love that transcends the barriers of Personality and constitutes the Unity. How this operates is set forth in what is called the doctrine of Coinherency. Despite its ugly name it describes a very wonderful process. In] the Trinity one Person is not merged into the Other by being transcended in some different form of unity, but it is *in* the other personality to such a degree that whatever the one does, He does not of Himself but for and through the other. The Father creates through the Son, the Son redeems through the Spirit; the Son only does that which He sees the Father do, the Spirit takes of the things of Jesus and reveals them to us. And the Father is so in the Son that the Father can only be known through the Son, and only through the Spirit do we have access to either. This is not an unintelligible jumble; it is a bald way of stating what can be stated in no other way, but in the mystic experience of love may be discovered to be a glorious reality.

What is most suggestive for our present application is the doctrine of the absolute equality of the Persons. The Creed states that “none is afore or after: none is greater or less than another.” And yet this is said to be coincident with the fact that the Father is underived,

the Son derived, and the Spirit doubly derived. There is also a difference of function: Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification; a difference of mode: Transcendence, Incarnation, and Immanence. Yet this does not constitute or sanction inequality or priority. Must there not be something similar in society? Should the fact of some of us being more dependent than others, of some of us having different work to do, obliterate the fundamental fact that as personalities we all have equal value because we share the one nature? Because of this we ought each to feel so much for the other that we suffer with him and in him. We do not "confound the persons": we cannot all be the same person or do the same things; but neither do we "divide the substance": deny the common nature, the absolute equality, or the one need.

2. Those who believe this should be the most urgent of social reformers.

(a.) The Church's attitude towards social reform is utterly to be condemned.

We have had the day of complete opposition to reform, sure that God intended things to remain as they are, completely swept away. And how can we sanction the way of war in the face of our faith that God died for all, even for those who were His enemies? How can we who believe in a Trinity in Unity believe either in a Church which has no diversity in its unity, or in a society where there are such inequalities that the very rights of personality and common humanity are denied to our fellow-creatures? How can we deny the fundamental equality

of human beings, as there is the tendency to do to-day? Do they not all equally need food, equally suffer, equally need God? What is the motto of the French Revolution—Liberté, Fraternité, Égalité—but the Athanasian Creed over again? It stands for the reality of the Persons, their absolute equality, and the unity of their love.

But we are still in the day when we are content simply to pick holes in the various schemes of reconstruction and point out what is wrong with them. This dog-in-the-manger policy is becoming an insult. If these schemes are wrong, what is the true one which we propose in its place? It will not do to talk any longer about generating an atmosphere, and then denying every materialization that takes place.

Least of all can we afford to say that a scheme would be ideal, if only human nature could be changed. It is our belief that human nature can be changed back into its original Divine image. And we are supposed to have the power to effect the change. Neither is it allowable for us to say that until every one is converted we can do nothing. Why should not those who are converted start themselves to live the new way?

(b) Here is the tragic betrayal of the Christian faith.

We have so lived that we have produced a widespread conclusion that the Christian faith is reactionary or without a programme, and we have thrown over our task to revolutionaries, and then derided them for not be-

lieving the faith which alone would make it possible, although we who believed did nothing at all; with the result that our faith has come to utter disrepute.

We have the great social cure, but no one would guess it. It is as if we had some wonderful specific that would reform the world, but we have kept it to ourselves and labelled the bottle, "How to keep things always the same." Then we complain that the quacks are abroad with their nostrums pretending to cure all.

But those of us who have come to a revived belief in orthodox, undiluted Catholic Christianity as the most revolutionary force in the world, and the only one that can carry a revolution through without force and to the emancipation of all, cannot get our message believed because men see that we stand on the same basis as they. We have to preach this Gospel standing on the bowed backs of those who toil. They will believe us when we stand on the common ground. The Gospel is the story of how God became man in order to save man; it cannot much longer be preached to the poor save by those who for His sake have become poor. May God give us back our faith and give us strength to construct the free platform from which it can be declared.

The Bible and the Church

“No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.”
—2 PETER i. 20.

IN the controversy aroused by the Reformation, Protestantism found itself in a great difficulty because of the absence of any final standard which it could oppose to the Roman claim of the authority of the Church, which it had rejected. When the new experience out of which the Reformation was born was still fresh and strong, there was no need to raise the question. Men were sure in their own souls that they were in touch with God, who was dealing with them in a saving way and was leading them to understand His will. On this conviction they found it unnecessary to hold Church tradition, and on many points were opposed to it. They rejected therefore the idea that the Church was an authority behind which men could not go. On many matters the Church had erred, both in regard to doctrine and morals, and the whole body of Christian truth and practice had now to be brought afresh to the bar of that judgment which had been liberated from sin by Christ and enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

But as the controversy developed, and as the first fervour waned, Protestantism found itself in a very doubtful position. Some ardent followers of the revolt wanted to go further than

the early Reformers felt to be right. On a similar basis of experience they questioned the fundamental doctrines of the faith, the necessity for any kind of Church, and even the validity of the moral law. Therefore to stop endless dissension amongst themselves, as well as to set up a bulwark against Rome, some standard had to be adopted, and the one to hand was the Bible.

In the earlier days of the Reformation Luther had allowed himself a very free attitude towards the Bible. He had brought the sacred writings to the test of his experience of the Gospel, and by that standard had found some of them deficient, notably the Epistle of James and the Book of Revelation. But maturer judgment modified his opinions, and although he had been prepared at one time to raise the whole question of the traditional authorship of the books and their canonicity, it was found to be necessary to accept at least the New Testament as it stood as a Court of Appeal.

Not only was the much freer attitude perforce abandoned, but the freer interpretation which looked rather to the spirit of the Gospel in the Bible gradually gave place to a greater regard for the text as a literal standard. Two judgments emerged from this tendency: the earlier, that the Bible contained the Word of God and, therefore, all that was sufficient for our salvation; the later, that it *was* the Word of God, and was a standard perfect in all its parts. The doctrine of its sufficiency gives the position that only what can be proved from

Scripture is to be taken as binding; and this has allowed a mediating position like that embodied in modern Anglicanism: the doctrine of its infallibility is more restrictive, and excludes anything which the Bible does not expressly sanction. "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants."

The extremer Protestant view at length came to regard the Bible as the Word of God, not in the earlier sense of the message of the Bible as a whole, but as if it were the *words* of God, dictated through mere amanuenses, its very diction the language of the Holy Ghost, and the whole guaranteed, down to the vowel-points of the Massoretic Hebrew text, not inserted, as we know, until the ninth century A.D.

THE RELATION OF CHURCH AND BIBLE IS LEFT OBSCURE.

1. It is admitted that the Protestant position has broken up.

(a) It was untenable in itself.

Logically it could not be defended. It held that the tradition of the Church was not to be trusted, but meantime it appealed to Scriptures that were guaranteed only by that tradition. A number of books not now found in our New Testament had been in circulation in the primitive Church, while in other parts of the Church some of the books in our New Testament were not accepted. Outside these there were also books, especially Gospels, which were in circulation among heretical sects. The Church had to make a pronouncement, and did so at the Council of Laodicea (363), when our New

Testament as we now have it was decided upon. To admit the validity of that action and to deny it everywhere else is obviously impossible.

To make the Scripture restrictive, especially in the case of the New Testament, can be shown to be using it in a way that its composition does not permit. The Gospels themselves do not profess to be complete accounts of all that Christ did and taught; the Epistles are in the main letters called forth to meet a particular need, and are anything but formal treatises of Christian doctrine as a whole; the Acts cannot be relied upon to give us a complete picture of the early Church, whether in its practice or its faith. If, for instance, the Lord's Supper had not degenerated into a most unseemly banquet at Corinth, we should never have known that St. Paul had any views at all about that ordinance or that he held such high sacramental notions.

The Protestant position has been found quite unworkable in practice. It is not too much to say that the more literally the Scriptures are followed the more violent disagreement grows, while the ultra-reverence for every letter is responsible for the narrowness and fantastic interpretations which are continually leading uninstructed people astray and bringing Christianity into contempt. No agreement can ever be looked for on the basis of the Bible literally interpreted, and without some authoritative guidance as to the right manner of interpretation the Bible can be almost as dangerous as the Roman Church has alleged.

(b) The question has now become acute.

For a long time now the demand for belief in the Bible has weighed heavily upon the conscience of Christendom, and has become a most serious stumbling-block to the understanding and acceptance of Christianity; it is not so much the presence of a large miraculous element in the records, but the presence of a very much lower ethical standard than is now widely accepted. If a man is asked if he believes in the Bible, that almost immediately brings up the question whether he is to believe that Jonah lived inside a whale for three days and three nights. But the harm that has been done by the unexpurgated recitation of the Psalter and by some of the Old Testament lessons read in the Prayer Book Lectionary is beyond all calculation.

The relief which has been gained through modern criticism is not one which provides an adequate guide for the mass of the people. In the main it is occupied with discussions which seem irrelevant or what conclusion is to be derived from the general results is very ambiguous. Moreover, criticism presents us with very confused utterances, and is in constant change. We are confronted with conservative, moderate, and advanced positions, and there is really nothing to enable us to decide which of these is nearest to the truth. There are those who declare that criticism has only rehabilitated the general body of the Catholic faith; others declare that it has justified the extreme Protestant position; while some declare, with equal show of authority and with a great appearance of learning, that it has resolved

everything into mist or myth. We are continually being disturbed by fresh theories that overturn what had been previously accepted as proved, and the schools of criticism seem to be swept this way and that by what are after all purely subjective principles.

This position has left us to face one of the most momentous decisions of our times without guidance. On the subject of Christianity and war the Bible texts have been bandied about by tribunals and theologians, conscientious objectors and parsons with amazing incompetence. But even where texts have been abandoned by both sides, and the great principles of the Incarnation and the Atonement, or the general tendency of the Bible and the message of Christ, are taken as standards, we still find no agreement, but the most complete opposition. We may take sides here, believing that the Bible is with us, and after much search and thought maintain our position with full confidence, but we have to admit that others draw a different conclusion, apparently from the same material.

2. It is difficult to see much help in the extreme solutions proposed.

(a) The one extreme would abandon the Bible as containing no unique revelation at all.

It is pointed out that it is quite impossible to draw a hard and fast line around the Bible and see inside this line a kind of literature which is completely separated from anything outside it. Even the most conservative would have to admit that as a matter of history there is a fringe of literature outside which

nearly secured canonicity, while there is a fringe within which only secured it after great hesitation. There is the outstanding question of the Apocrypha, which Catholics admit and Protestants do not; a literature which is at least valuable for showing the growth of ideas between the Old Testament and the New. And now there is the new problem of the recently discovered Apocalyptic, which alone provides us with any understanding of what Christ meant when He called Himself "the Son of man."

Others would, however, go much further, and see in the Bible simply the literature which gathered round a certain development of religion. They would inquire on what principle that literature was to be separated from the ideas, if not the literature, of other religions, from which it manifestly draws, or why it should be elevated into a position any different from that which should be accorded to the books of the Egyptian religion or the sacred literatures of Hinduism or Buddhism. And even those who would maintain that the Bible stood higher than these sometime question why the Biblical literature of our own religion should be held to have come to an end. They would like to bind up the "Pilgrim's Progress" with the Bible, or they would elevate to the same position of being used for public worship extracts from modern poets and thinkers.

But however much might be argued in theory for these positions, we have still to face the fact, which few competent to pronounce would deny, namely, that there is a vast difference

between the literature collected in the Bible and any other collection which exists or could now be made. It is in the free competition of the modern world that the Bible can be safely left to maintain its position as the first of all books. Nowhere else shall we find so much that voices the highest aspiration of the soul, that brings to such clearness the purest thought of God. And no other religious literature represents a movement which proceeds so surely to its goal, or reveals such an underlying unity of purpose and conception. And those who know best the whole Bible, the contributory literature, and the works which have been excluded, would acknowledge that if there is wanted any proof of the Church being guided by good sense, if by nothing higher, we need only point to its decision about the canon.

(b) That brings before us the other extreme, that the Church alone is sole guardian and interpreter of the Scriptures.

We are compelled to admit that if Church tradition is primitive, its mere lack of mention in the New Testament does not foreclose the issue. We must allow that the Church has the right to draw out in doctrinal definition, to lay down moral decisions, or to adopt elements in worship that are true to the great principles of the Christian faith.

There are certain advantages that we can see in the Roman position. We do get away from Bibliolatry, which has been the curse of Protestantism, and there is a restriction placed upon fantastic individual interpretation. To

place the Church alongside the Bible gives a sort of dual control and removes the fatal impression that the Christian faith is bound up in a book, that it is a legal and documentary thing, that it has upon it a restrictive hand from the past and can look for no present inspiration and for no further development. After all, a Church is a more living thing than a book, however sacred, and the Roman Church does embody the idea of a resident Christ, accessible in His sacraments, and still guiding His Church.

But we have to go on to say that while it is necessary that there should be some body which should guide the interpretation of Scripture, this is needed not so much for saying what a certain text means—honest scholarship can discover that—but for giving a clear line of thought about the Bible as a whole, which will commend itself to any who have the Bible in their hands, and for drawing out the application of its message to modern life. But such a body will only command confidence if it draws upon the highest scholarship, if it shows a disposition to admit willingly all ascertained facts, and if it allows the greatest freedom of discussion as a preliminary to decision. Anything like timidity about the Bible being put into the hands of the people will only produce the impression that there is something the Church cannot face. Although the Roman position, and even its definition of inspiration, seems superior to the Protestant position and some of its definitions, yet it has been accompanied by a procedure and a spirit which have made it inoperative and suspect.

THE NEW ATTITUDE WHICH IS NOW DEMANDED
AND MADE POSSIBLE.

1. We can see better what the nature of Biblical inspiration is.

(a) It is in the facts and personalities rather than in the record.

The Bible shows no sign whatever of having been dictated by God. It has been compiled by the ordinary methods of historical research; it exhibits the style of the different authors; it retains something of their limitations and prejudices. It has not been miraculously preserved from error, legendary accretion, or the invasion of contradictory elements; least of all has the actual text been preserved from the corruption which always accompanies manuscript transmission.

But that is not all that has to be said. We cannot explain by purely human means the unity of purpose, the heights of statement reached, in which truth, beauty, and simplicity are so gloriously united, or the persistence of right development. It is when one considers the movement which the Bible represents, takes into account the human limitations, the struggles and setbacks, the prejudices of race and persons, that one is only the more aware that there has been guidance, that there is some mind beyond the individual minds to which the end was clear from the beginning. It is the fact that the Bible records the growth of one religion out of another, the taking up of primitive ideas, pagan customs, and intensely national hopes, and makes them contribute towards a spiritual and universal religion that

earns for the Bible the supreme title of the Word of God. It is the resultant movement that is the Word, not necessarily its constituent parts.

But the title "Word of God" is in the Bible itself finally applied to a person, and that is the clue to the whole. The inspiration of the Bible is primarily an inspiration of persons. It is the fact that certain persons lived and acted as they did which caused the book ever to be written; and it is both the fact of the person and the spiritual power that he exercised that has kept the book true to its purpose. What has guided the whole is the purpose of God to reveal Him who alone deserves the title of the Word of God; for when God utters Himself a word is not enough, He needs a Person. The Bible sets before us a character and His meaning, and thus fulfils the highest purpose that a book can serve.

(b) It is an inspiration that itself inspires.

(We need not wonder that the inspiration of the Bible is peculiar and unique, and that it has come to an end. This is only in line with all God's way of working. He sets a nation or an age to a particular piece of work along a certain line of expression, only in order that the whole world may enter fully into the inheritance of truth and beauty. There is nothing else like the Bible, and there never will be; for its purpose was to make visible to all mankind that Word through which the worlds were made and the mind of man is enlightened. No literature can ever compete with the Bible, and nothing can be added to it, for the Bible has achieved a

purpose which literature can never transcend: it has pointed beyond words to the Word made flesh. And with that the great inspiration that produced the Bible ceases to act.

But the purpose of the book remains not legal and restrictive, but inspirational and creative. Any theory that leaves the Bible a drag upon progress or a hindrance to thought is an invalid and alien theory. It stands there to inspire men to look for the same guidance and to apply to every department of life the principles that it lays down. The very form in which it was written makes any attempt to treat it as a law obviously a mistake. Some of the documents on which most weight has been laid, the Epistles of St. Paul, were obviously not designed by their author for such purposes. They "reflect in every line the ruggedness of one who never dreamt that his words, often the outcome of burning zeal or of anxious fears, and uttered for the occasion only, were to become literature, and, least of all, sacred literature." This does not make them less literature, and it makes them even more inspiring; but it does prevent their being used in a way their author never intended and would certainly deprecate.

We ought to come to the Bible, therefore, not to construct a theory of inspiration, but to get ourselves inspired, by being brought face to face with the sole source of all inspiration, the Spirit of God. If our Bible reading does not lead to that, it is plain that we are misusing our Bible. There has been a very great decline in Bible-reading within the last generation, and

that makes it more difficult for the preacher, and it means a great loss to our generation. But it has also to be remembered that much of the old Bible-reading was mechanical, without true appreciation, and it sometimes had the effect of leaving a totally wrong impression upon those who read it. To know the letter and to love it was sometimes compatible with complete ignorance of the real message of the Bible. The new method of studying it as a development, as a record of how the Word of God came to men until finally it was incarnate, has made it the most fascinating, the most human, the most universal, as well as the most Divine of books.

2. We can now understand better what is the relation of the Bible to the Church.

(a) On every count the Church stands in a position of at least equal authority.

The Church was in existence, with its faith and its worship, before a line of the New Testament was written, and could conceivably have existed without the New Testament at all. All attempts to evade this issue and make the Bible self-authenticating have the unfortunate effect of leaving the Old Testament in the superior legal position; a topsy-turvydom that is reflected in the amalgam which still passes for Christianity, in which the Old Testament element preponderates.

Moreover, the New Testament was written by the Church, to the Church, for the Church. As is now generally admitted, the Gospels are not histories in the ordinary sense of the word, but are written in the atmosphere of faith and to

confirm faith; and any attempt to make out of them instruments for destroying the faith must be defeated from the outset. Criticism has been at last compelled to recognize that the claim which makes out that the Gospels can be set over against the Epistles is wholly invalid; while at the same time it has to admit that the Gospels have reproduced the atmosphere of their times with an extraordinary fidelity which raises their testimony to a very high level. There is as little attempt made to read back the further evolved position of the Church as there is consciousness that there is any contradiction between them.

With these considerations it becomes impossible to say that the Church has not the right to plead tradition as well as the Scripture; for the tradition may be older, and from the nature of the case it is not at all necessary for something which can be substantiated by tradition to be actually mentioned in Scripture. It is the things upon which there was complete agreement which are not likely to be mentioned at all. Neither is it allowable to plead that certain ideas have more space and thought devoted to them, and should therefore have a similar proportion to-day. We cannot say, therefore, that the Church is disqualified from being a joint witness with Scripture, without which the whole of Christianity cannot be grasped.

(b) But we want to be assured that it is the Church that interprets.

The present Catholic exposition does not even set forth the latent advantages it has over the purely Protestant position. The Church must be

prepared to show how its general position follows not from some hypothetical tradition, for which there may or may not be room, but from the great principles of Christianity, and from the principle of Biblical revelation as a whole. It has a much stronger appeal here than it knows. It must, however, face the charge that in the nature of things an Institution is more liable to corruption than a Literature, and if there seems to be a falling off from the high spirituality and central concern of the New Testament, it will take a great deal of justification. Nor can the Church claim a higher degree of infallibility than that which can be claimed for the Scriptures. That does give general guidance, it does secure final attainment, but it does not exclude formal error or many setbacks.

The Church ought to be more engaged with meeting the present situation than in proving its past efficiency and right. The world wants guidance to-day on such subjects as the position of women in the ministration and governance of the Church; it wants to know how the principles of Christianity are to be applied to the demand for a new economic basis for society; it wants to know whether Christianity sanctions war; it wants to know how the Kingdom of God is to be established. Can the Church draw out the principles of Christianity to meet these questions, or have we to look elsewhere for light?

But such demands raise the question as to what the Church is which has the authority to pronounce. If the Church is so defined that it shuts out the great contributions of modern

Biblical Science, it will stand self-condemned. If it asks that we shall admit the necessity for a central authority, and even a single head, for the purpose of giving decisions, we shall want to know that this authority does sum up the decision of the Church as a whole, and does not depend upon a mere clique, whether of obscurantists or of the very advanced. And to secure this there must be a great incentive for the whole Church to give itself freely to the subject, and if excessive individualism is to be deprecated, there must be provision for close fellowship in every grade of Church organization.

Everything points to the need of a synthesis. We want the classical expression of faith with a living Church to interpret; we want principles that are rooted in the past, but which are capable of confronting the future; we want independent interpretation, yet seeking correction from the great movement enshrined both in the Bible and in the history of the Church, through which the Spirit of God has manifestly spoken. And with these three, Scripture, Church, and personal experience, we have a trinity in unity which alone meets the whole situation and can give us the whole of Christianity.

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